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by

Florence Briney Reed

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MAR 23 1916

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The Black Cat

VOL. XXI. No. 7 APRIL, 1916 10c. a COPY. $1.00 a YEAR

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ISSUED MONTHLY BY THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING COMPANY
Salem, Mass.
Entered at the Post-Office at Salem, Mass. as second-class matter.
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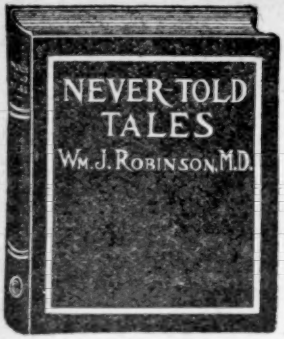

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The Girl at the Window

BY FLORENCE BRINEY REED

OU go right through the orchard and follow the wagon track through the woods, and cross the field and go down hill and along the wall by the Old Shephard House, across the railroad, and there you are."

Miss Jane Preston leaned her elbows on the top bar of the fence and looked at her nephew who stood holding a large bouquet of scarlet sage, yellow dahlias and orange marigolds. It was Jane Preston's habit to remember each anniversary of the departed Prestons with a floral tribute, but today, engrossed with the unexpected arrival of her only nephew, John, she had forgotten the choice blossoms plucked early and kept "down cellar" for the adorning of Grandmother Preston's last resting place, until almost supper time. John, seeing her distress, had generously volunteered to carry the offering himself, and Aunt Jane had suggested that he take what she called "the cut across." "Now if Julius hadn't gone off with the horse," she remarked, "I'd hitch up and we'd drive over after supper, but you'll get there in no time this way. Grandmother's stone has the willow and clasped hands on it. You get the right one now and don't drop them flowers just anywhere, and don't let the ghost at the Shephard house scare you!"

"Ghost at the Shephard House! Tell me about it," said John, coming back and seating himself on the rail. "Plenty of time, and I ought to be prepared for the worst. What sort of a 'hant' is it?"

"Gloryful goodness, John! Surely you've heard the tales about the Shephard House! Seems to me, you've forgot all you ever knew, since you went to college. Don't you remember the old stone house 'cross the railroad tracks, by the graveyard—old stone house with a high wall around it and iron gates? I guess you've heard your Pa and Ma tell about it."

"Well, tell me again," said the young man.

"He came here—that man did," Aunt Jane began, "time of the war—in '62—and he built that house—and for queerness he was the beat—and his house was as curious as he was. He had two black folks, too, and folks wouldn't get used to them. They came after the house was finished. The men who helped build it said it was a curious sort of place, all around, and this man called himself Shephard, and he had grey, pretty near white hair and black eyes, and was terrible solemn looking. Some said he was refugeeing. Pretty soon Aletha Richmond went there to be housekeeper. Aletha lived in a little cabin, a piece down the road from the Shephard place, and lived there all alone, after her Ma died. No one ever knew where her Pa and brother

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went. They were always the wandering kind, them Richmonds, and queer, dark folks. Some said they was part foreign. And when Aletha went there, she got queerer and queerer, and folks never got nothing out of her about nothing. And so folks would hear curious sounds there—cries and moans, and they'd see a hand or arms waving from the upstairs window. And some saw a girl standing there at times, staring out, a slim-like, fair girl. 'Twasn't Aletha, and they say sometimes folks see a tall, slim, white shape hurrying across from there to the graveyard.

"Shephard, he left, and Aletha got the house. He gave it to her, I reckon, instead of regular wages, for she couldn't have bought it, and then Aletha shut herself up there and never goes out, only to the store for her groceries. And she keeps a big bloodhound dog there with her, and when they asked her about the girl being there, she just stared and said, 'Pictures—pictures'!

"It got around, he was an artist, Shephard, you know, and, I guess, maybe, he was, for all folks knew.

"Doctor Baxter, he's the old doctor now, he used to go there a good deal, and no one ever could get him to say much about it.

"Oh, there's no getting round it, there's queer things went on there. Aletha, she don't talk, but she gets letters from New York regularly."

"Thrilling tale," remarked her nephew, " 'specially mysterious to receive letters from New York. Well—guess I'll start now," and he sprang across the fence into the orchard.

After a scramble down the hill beyond the woods, he found the path across the meadow, which led him along the ivy-hung wall of the old place Aunt Jane had described; thence into the gloomy little cemetery where Aunt Jane's offering was placed against the somber myrtle on the sunken mound. Remembering all he had heard of the house across the road, he glanced at it curiously. There did, indeed, seem to be something unusual about it as it stood grim and dark behind the wall. The high wall hid the lower part of it, but the upper windows gleamed out in the sunset with the small panes reflecting the colors like a shell.

There were pine trees in the yard and also pine trees in the graveyard, and as Preston stood and watched the silent house, a low, soft wind came sighing through the trees and the air seemed full of whisperings. He thought, with a smile, how well the place was set for mysteries. And as he thought, he looked again at those blank upper windows, but paused with a sudden start. One window still reflected the sunset, but the other one showed a woman, a girl with long fair hair and wistful eyes. Even as he stared at her she seemed to vanish, and the window was blank and empty.

John Preston was a practical college man, but he walked along the cinder path by the railroad and out into the dusty road just as nervously as might have any village boy.

Aunt Jane greeted him graciously: "My! You made a quick trip—ain't seen anything at the old Shephard House, I reckon?" The chuckle which followed, mercifully relieved

John from replying, and later, as they sat down to the appetizing supper of hot biscuits and fried chicken, he ventured to say: "Tell me more about the old Shephard place, Aunt Jane!"

"Lawsy, John! I don't remember all those tales. Aletha has kept folks away so, and acted so dumb for the last thirty years that no one pays any attention to it any more. Guess it was mostly talk."

"Yes—but the lady at the window—tell me about that!"

"Well," said Aunt Jane, pouring out a cup of tea and tasting it, "they said there was a beautiful woman that used to be seen at the window sometimes, but not many saw her, and some said it was just a picture he painted on the glass, for she always stood staring out, with her long yellow hair hanging down."

"Yellow hair!" said John, remembering the soft cloud of gold which had framed the face he saw. Aunt Jane nodded.

"Yellow as gold, brother Sam said; there, I didn't mean to let the cat out of the bag, and you'll think I'm crazy, but I might as well tell you the truth. Brother Sam—he saw her—or it—I s'pose I'd ought to say—just 'fore he went to the army—third year of the war, you know. He went down to the graveyard to Jim's grave. Jim being his twin, he sorter thought about how, if he'd lived, he'd been going with him, and so he went off cross lots just about sundown, and when he came back, he looked real curious, and said to me, 'Jane, come here'—I was next to him and his favorite—and so we went down the orchard to the creek and he told me. Said he'd been in the graveyard and was coming home, when he thought he heard a scream, kinder queer and muffled like, and he looked up at the Shephard House, thinking of the stories, and at the upstairs window was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. He said she had on a white dress and a curious striped shawl, and had long yellow hair. She had big, sorrowful eyes that looked right straight at him. Sam said he turned right dizzy for a minute and shut his eyes, and when he opened them again she wasn't there! I can't say now, but I can just hear him tell it, and the shivering feelings that I had then come now, at times, for Sam thought it was a sign that he was never coming home again, and he didn't, either, poor Sam!"

"But—Aunt Jane! Surely you didn't believe," began John.

"No—I always thought it must be a picture or something and Sam was sort of worked up—and I mistrust he'd been crying, mebbe, there by himself, he was such a boy, you know, and there the sun, mebbe, dazzled his eyes like. 'T any rate, when I grew up I knew there was nothing to it, and so I almost forgot it till just tonight, talking to you, brought it back. Take more chicken, do," but John pushed his plate away and departed to pace up and down the drive and smoke. And Aunt Jane, watching him keenly, said to herself, "I hope he's not in for a spell of sickness; he acts real queer and quiet like."

Three times did John Preston walk down the hill and across through the woods in the direction of the grave-

yard. The first trips were uneventful. The old house showed only blank, shining windows, and there was no sign of life—but on the third trip he encountered an old woman hurrying along the road before him. There was no other house—she must be going to the Shephard place. He walked rapidly and overtook her at the gate.

"Pardon—madam!" he said, as she turned her face toward him.

"What do you want?" her thin lips almost formed rather than spoke the words.

"I wonder," he began, "if you could show me the Preston lot in the cemetery? I would like to find it."

"That's a lie," the woman cried suddenly, "a lie! Ye know the Preston lot. I've seen ye there. You're spying and sneaking around here, and you've got to stop it; d'ye hear? Stop it! Stop a-looking and a-peeking and a-staring at my house. There's nothing for ye to see; there's nothing there, I tell ye!"

During this vehement sentence, John's eyes had wandered to the house and he saw, with a start, the slender form, the delicate face, the wistful eyes and golden hair, pressed close to the glass, and around the slender shoulders was a shawl of curious stripes, broad stripes of crimson, and many colored ones between. Seeing the look on his face, the old woman turned and looked also, and then, with a scream, she sprang forward at John. Moving aside from her as she pressed close to him, he turned his face from the window, and when he looked again there was nothing to be seen.

"Oh, go, sir, kind sir!" panted the old woman. "Do not stay, if you are a Preston; they used to be good folks. There's no kindness in scaring a poor old woman out of her wits. I've nothing to steal if you're a robber. There's nobody lives here but me—no one at all."

Seeing the poor old woman was trembling and deeply agitated, John felt suddenly ashamed of himself and said apologetically, "I did not mean to frighten you, and I'm not a robber. I'm only John Preston—Millie Dunn's son."

"Then will you go, sir—right away—and never, oh, never, come nigh here again?" she said, and John, with a bow and one last backward look, left her. As he passed along in the shadow of the great wall, he heard the house door open and the bay of the hound and another voice, a voice sweet and young, and then silence.

That night he was so silent that kindly Aunt Jane, fearing her prediction of a "spell of sickness" was about to come true, prepared a stew of various old pungent herbs; at the sight of which, remembering doses of old, John broke into a laugh and said, "Rather than swallow one spoonful of that, I'll confess, Aunt Jane, I've seen—"

"I knew it!" said Aunt Jane. "Wait till I set this down. Now you tell me all about it. Was it the waving hand—or what?" Aunt Jane leaned forward, eager as a child, while her nephew grew serious again as he answered.

"Neither, Auntie! It was the girl at the window—the girl with the yellow hair."

At this, the round, rosy face of the good woman grew worried as she sighed: "Oh, dear. That's just like Sam said it, and you always put me in mind of Sam, too. I hope it ain't a sign of trouble."

"Nonsense," said John. "There are no such things as signs, Auntie! You ought to be too good a Baptist to think of it. But there is something queer about that house. I wish I could find out what it is. Who was that old woman?"

"Aletha—of course—she's pretty feeble now, they say, but she would have no one stop with her. She's always been just so about the house."

"Well, I can't hang around there in daylight for awhile, that's sure, and still I wish—"

Aunt Jane leaned forward eagerly. "John, I've got the very thing—your Uncle Roger's old field glasses; they are mighty powerful and you can use them and see, mebbe. I'll get them," and leaving the room, she presently came back with the glasses, which she placed in her nephew's hands. "Let's try it now," she said. "It's clear moonlight, and we can go up in the barn loft for a good view; the woods cut us off from here."

John smiled, as he examined the old glasses. "Aunt Jane! You are surely what we call now days, a good sport. These are dandy old glasses. Come on! Get a coat, or something, and we'll try them."

Making their way across the yard and up the slope beyond to the great barn, Aunt Jane talked of the mysterious vision and demanded every detail. "Was the shawl broad and narrow strips? That's a woman's shawl then. Lots of red in it? That's what Sam said. Nobody had them but rich folks—and—here's the key, John! Lucky for us Julius went to the political meeting at Quincy tonight, or we couldn't be doing this," and chuckling at the thought of the hired man's amazement, she climbed the ladder to the loft and swung open the window. "Here we are, John! You look first."

John swept the horizon. "Yes, I can see plainly—even the gravestones. The house is all dark. It's all quiet. By George, it looks lonely away down there." He placed the glasses in his aunt's hands and leaned against the window, listening to the katydids, whose shrill notes cut the silence. His aunt gave a start. "John!" she said, a little breathlessly. "Maybe you think me crazy, but the door to that house opened just now, and there's something standing in it; you look!"

Snatching the glass from her hand, he stared down the hollow of the valley. It was even as she said. The door was open and in the light there stood a slender figure in white. She seemed to be looking about her in distress. By the aid of the powerful glass he could see her turn to look about her and then clasp her hands in a gesture of fear or despair. The light from within fell on her long fair hair, and the face was the face he had seen at the window. He placed the glasses in his aunt's hands abruptly.

"Here," he said, "there's something wrong down there, and I'm going to see what it is. Don't worry," and he left, descended the ladder and walked swiftly across the barn lot

toward the woods. Once beyond the thick woods he broke into a run and plunged down the hill toward the graveyard and the Shephard place. As he drew nearer, he saw the door was still open and as the loud bay of the hound announced his approach, the white figure appeared again and a voice called, "Is anybody coming?"

"She must be flesh and blood," thought John to himself, "as she speaks," and he replied cheerily, "Yes. It is John Preston. I saw the light. Do you need any help?"

"Oh—yes—yes," cried the girl. "Wait till I chain Peter and unlock the gate."

He stood beside the tall iron gate and heard her softly coaxing the great dog, and presently she was there beyond the bars, fitting the key in the padlock. As the gates fell open with a dull clang, he stepped within, and felt the quick clasp of her hand on his arm and he covered the little hand with his.

No spirit this; only a lovely, frightened girl, whose eyes met his beseechingly, and yet there was indeed some mystery here. Aunt Jane had declared the queer old woman lived here all alone. He drew back as she turned toward the door.

"Oh, what's the matter?" she cried, "aren't you coming to help? I'm so frightened!" And she dropped down on the broad stone of the walk and began to cry. John, leaning over, lifted her to her feet and began to smooth her hair rather awkwardly.

"Of course, I'm coming in," he said, soothingly, "but can you tell me what has happened?"

"It's Aunt Aletha," she answered, pulling shyly away from him. "She's so queer. I'm frightened to death. Please come!"

And this time John, striding ahead of her, entered the house and turned toward the open door at the left of the hall. Lying in a queer heap on an old hair-cloth settle, he saw the woman he had talked with that afternoon. One side of her face had a curious, drawn look, and her eyes met his vacantly.

"I was in my room just ready to braid my hair for the night," said the girl, "when I heard her moving about down here, and suddenly she said something in a loud, queer voice, and then I heard her fall, and I came running as fast as I could. I put her on the sofa and got the camphor, but it didn't do any good. Does she look awful? She isn't going to die, is she?" And the brown eyes met his appealingly.

"I don't know," stammered John. "I think we'd better try to get a doctor. Listen! There's some one coming." For the hound was baying loud again, and presently quick, nervous steps were coming up the stones of the walk. In the silence, as they waited, a voice called outside, sharply, "John—John Preston! Are you in there?"

"It's my aunt," said John. "She'll know what to do," and he hurried to the door.

Aunt Jane, pale, but determined, was already in the hall. She looked greatly relieved at the sight of her nephew and said, "Of course, I was watching all the time, and when I saw her let you in the gate, I just had to come. I thought

about witches and poor Sam all the way. Thank goodness, you're all right! Where's Aletha?"

"In there," said her nephew. "Come!" and they entered the room together. But at the sight of the girl, who was bending over the form on the sofa, putting a cover across the twisted figure, Aunt Jane's agitation grew alarming.

"John!" she gasped, "look there! It's that girl, and that shawl, too!" and she leaned so heavily against him that he cried, "Here, young lady, I don't know your name, but bring me that camphor, quick, or we'll have two of them on our hands."

As he guided his aunt to a chair, the girl came quickly with the bottle, and the sight and feel of the camphor bottle seemed to restore the fainting woman, as much as its pungent contents.

Then John said quickly, "Go and heat some water and get some whiskey if you have it."

"I have some in my travelling bag," she answered. "Isn't it lucky?"

And as she left the room, he said in a low tone, "I don't understand it, Aunt Jane, but she's no ghost, I can tell you that, for I—" and he hesitated a moment, while Aunt Jane said in her natural way, "Yes, I know you did; I saw it. That was when I started after you. But it gave me a start to see the shawl, that striped red shawl, yonder;" and sure enough, the woman on the couch was covered with the gay striped shawl.

"Never mind that! What's the matter with her?" he inquired, and Aunt Jane, recovering herself, took one more sniff at the camphor bottle and moved resolutely toward the sofa. "Hum!" she said, looking down at the woman who lay there, "it's either a fit, or a stroke; looks a little like both, John. You'll have to go for the doctor, that's all there is to it. I'll stay here, if it kills me. I can't walk there as quick as you can."

"I'm sure you're safe, Aunt Jane!" said her nephew. "And now I'll go and come back as soon as I can."

"Follow the road," called his aunt as he walked swiftly down the steps "And after you get up into town, it's the third house up beyond the Baptist church."

Walking along the deserted road in the still night, John Preston's thoughts were in a whirl. He hardly knew how he reached the doctor's house, nor how he stated his errand to the white-haired man who opened the door. In some way, he made him understand however, and he found himself walking back again, beside his elderly companion.

"What's wrong down there, hey?" said the doctor.

John told him briefly, adding, "My aunt is there and Miss Aletha's niece," but the old doctor stopped short and staring at John said sharply, "Hey, what's that? What's that? Niece! Whose niece?"

"Miss Richmond's—Miss Aletha's," answered John.

"Boy," said the old man, looking at him keenly, "you wouldn't drag an old man all this way on a fool's errand, would you?"

"I don't know what you mean," retorted John. "I don't call a visit to a dying woman any fool's errand."

"But," murmured the old man, "her

niece—Aletha's niece! Aletha has no niece. Who can you mean?"

"Oh, come on, for heaven's sake!" cried the younger man. "I'm tired of all these mysteries. I don't care whether she's a niece or not. Hurry up!"

"I wonder," said the doctor, half to himself—

They spoke no more words together until they reached the house, and as they entered, the doctor looked about with a sigh and said, "How many years since I have been here, and the old place is unchanged!—Uh! There is your aunt—and what—look! Some one is with her."

"I told you," said John impatiently. "Here we are, Aunt Jane! How is she?"

Aunt Jane appeared quite her usual self and was bustling about in her cheerful, busy manner, and by her was the girl, but quite a different creature from the elfish maiden John had left. She had changed her loose robe for a blouse and short skirt, and her golden hair was braided neatly and fastened about her head.

"Come right in, doctor," said Aunt Jane. (This is Doctor Baxter, child.) Aletha has had a stroke or something. Evalina, you get the doctor a drink of water, it's a long walk down here, and see that the coffee's all right. I guess we'll sit up—some of us—so I made coffee."

As the girl vanished into the kitchen, and the doctor passed on into the room where his patient lay, John looked dazed, and his aunt said briskly, "Evalina's real helpful. It's good she's come—just in time to nurse Aletha. Why, what's the matter?"

"Evalina," said John. "Who is she and where did she come from?"

"She's Aletha's niece, or great niece, I guess. She's come to stay with Aletha, being all alone in the world. She was telling me how she's lived in Mexico and all over, and how all her life she's heard about her Aunt Aletha, but she's awfully disappointed in her. Says she ain't been out to the village nor seen a single soul since she's been here. Aletha wrote her to get off at the water tank, and she got here at night. Come on, Evalina! I was telling John how you came here."

"It is all so strange," said the girl, sitting wearily down on the step. "My mother had never seen Aunt Aletha, and she did not act as if she wanted me at all. Mama was named for her, but I am called Evalina. There's the doctor!"

The old man looked keenly at the young face raised to his in eager inquiry.

"She is in a strange state," he said. "I cannot tell at present. She has had a severe nervous shock. Apparently there is no immediate danger—but—well—we can tell later—perhaps. Can you stay tonight?"

"We can," answered Aunt Jane. "Evalina and me'll go to bed now for a snatch of sleep, and John'll set up, and you lay down on the sofa in the dining-room."

The old house was soon very still, and the sounds from the dining-room indicated that the good old doctor was indulging in a nap. John sat by the fireplace. Before him was a chimney piece of boulders fitted together, and a hearth formed of a great flat

stone, not unlike a gravestone, John fancied. John dozed a little in the old chair, but roused quickly at a whisper over his shoulder:

"John! John Preston, come here!"

It was Aunt Jane, mysterious, frightened, beckoning him toward the door. With a backward glance at the woman, who lay rigid and silent as ever on the couch, he followed her. Out in the hall and up the stairs they passed, and she drew him into one of the large square upper chambers and closed the door.

"Now, John Preston!" she began in a cautious undertone, "I couldn't sleep a wink in that old tester bed, never could, and so I got up to look around. I got to thinking about the secret doors and things I'd heard so much about, so I began to hunt. Now look at that mantel, good. See that old-fashioned long mirror put right by the side of it."

John looked. There was a long cheval glass, dim and misty with age, fitted close by the mantel. The broad frame of tarnished gold extended from the floor almost to the ceiling.

"Now I thought it was a funny place to put a mirror, so I looked at it close and—now wait—you watch!" Passing to the side of the old chimney-place, Aunt Jane took hold of the carved frame and pulled at it, and the mirror slowly began to swing outward like a door. "Now John! You come help and see if you see what I saw."

John leaned forward and saw a shallow recess within whose depths a figure seemed to wait. It was a tall, slender girl, with flowing yellow hair and the striped shawl about her. It startled him only a moment, for his keen eyes quickly discovered that it was nothing but a picture—a portrait remarkably life-like—but of whom? The canvas was placed against the wall without frame, and as John bent forward to look closer, he saw at the bottom of the shallow closet a roll of old paper. Picking it up, he saw it was closely covered with writing, when a fancied sound below the stairs startled him. He stepped back quickly and the mirror swung into place again. Hastily descending the stairs he entered the lower room with the papers still in his hand.

He found the woman on the couch, but her eyes glared at him in a menacing manner and she pointed her hand at him with a threatening gesture. A hoarse cry came from her stiffened lips and she forcéd them to speak the words: "Aletha keeps her promise—no one shall know." The cry brought the old doctor, but the young lady was there before him and, looking at John, she said in a frightened voice, "That is what she cried before. What is it no one must know?" But John could not answer, and thrusting the old papers within his coat, he sprang forward to help with the sick woman. She lay as before, only the black eyes had lost their dulness and gleamed out of her set face as though all the fire of life in that feeble frame was conserved within their depths.

There was no chance in the busy hours which followed for John to investigate the old papers, and it was not until the next evening that he found time to read them. They had come back to Aunt Jane's for the

night. Mary Flynn, a stout Irish woman, was to stay with the sick woman, and Doctor Baxter had driven up for supper.

"I've put Evalina on the bed for a nap," said Aunt Jane, "and I've covered her up with that shawl, and it gives me the chills to see it. She says Aletha told her it was her grandmother's. Well, I'm going out and sit under the locust for a while. You can smoke, I guess, if you have to."

"Thanks," laughed her nephew. "Come, Doctor, let's go over those papers now. They were in the bottom of that closet place I told you about. Seems to be a sort of diary."

The pages were old and yellow and the ink was faded. It appeared to have been written at irregular intervals. It began:

March 6, '62—The house is finished—they will be here soon.

March 20,—They came safely. Zaydee gave her a strong draught and she lay quiet in the shelter of the covered wagon. She is now sleeping. I dread her first sight of me. The village folks look askance at Zeke and Zaydee—black people are curious sights to them. I have listened for her to waken, but she is quiet. I will go to bed.

March 29,—At first she was docile and quiet, but she grows restless; she looks at me fixedly, but shows no recognition. God send she does not remember, poor child.

March 30,—Last night she watched me and suddenly screamed. I knew then that her poor tortured brain was awaking memory. How can we keep our secret?

April 10,—She wanders to the windows and waves her hands wildly as though imploring help. Her only sight of me brings one of those heartbreaking cries. She fears me. I can not speak to her.

April 11,—She has been seen at the window; I am sure of it. I must guard against discovery.

April 15,—I am painting her portrait. I wish I had my old skill. It seems to amuse her and she stands patiently before me. She is not afraid any more, and today she said softly, "Robert! Robert!"—and then, "Where is he?" Heaven forgive me, I could not answer her.

April 30,—She will not be separated from the shawl he bought in Rome. I have painted her with it. She lays her poor thin hand on it lovingly and says over and over, "Robert! Robert!" And then always, "Where is he?"

May 1,—Zaydee has told me she fears she is worse. I cannot see it, but I am half mad myself.

May 3,—Zeke says the village is full of queer tales about our house. It is well; fear will keep them away awhile.

May 11,—There are no neighbors here—only the dead sleeping across yonder in the graveyard. There is a cabin not far down the road, but the village lies farther to the east. Perhaps we may stay in safety till the war is over. I pray so.

June 3,—Zaydee was right. She is much worse. She is so wild today that the strong room in the cellar has been put in readiness and we watch her constantly.

June 5,—Last night she escaped. We were all worn out, and Zaydee, with all her strenght, could not hold

her hands forever. With the cunning of madness, she feigned sleep until we relaxed our guard, and then, like a flash, she flew across the grass and beyond the wall, toward the little graveyard. Zaydee was too exhausted to do anything but pray, as she staggered after her. I saw her bending over the graves as though searching. I reached her side, and as I put out my arm, a strange-looking girl sprang out of the shadows and took her hand—my heart stood still as Evalina turned to the stranger and said, "Robert—where is he?" and then seeing me, she gave that unearthly scream and pointing to me, cried, "He knows—he killed him." The strange-looking girl said quickly, "Come with me," and to my surprise, she went meekly. That girl is with her now. I suppose by tomorrow it will all be over. Well, I must bear my fate.

June 6,—This girl is strange. She says her name is Aletha—I have told her all, and without a question, she said, "I will never speak; you may be sure of me." And I believe her.

June 11,—Aletha is one of us. She is a dark, silent creature. Perhaps she has her own secrets.

June 20,—We keep her in the strong room now. Zeke and Aletha watch her.

June 22,—Aletha is known in the village now as my housekeeper. Heaven only knows what tales she has set about the house. For she has sworn to me no one shall ever know the truth. Aletha and all her brood shall want for nothing. She is like a faithful dog—poor outcast—so grateful for a kindly word from such as I.

July 9,—It is over. As the end seemed near, I could no longer bear it, and, seizing her in my arms, I kissed her,—the first time I had touched her since that fatal night. With a last effort she raised her lovely dark eyes to my face and said weakly, "Robert? You killed him." Then she died.

July 12,—We have laid her in the place prepared. Ah, how well I planned this house of horrors! In her white gown with her long hair—those braids of gold—all unbound and hiding that fair face,—so we laid her; about her I folded the flag—his flag that she loved so well. Aletha had brought her shawl, knowing how she loved it, but I could not let it go. So the flag, with those blood stains on it, rests with her. The storm howled about us all night—a wild requiem.

August 9,—It is a month since she died. The stones which hide that frail, quiet body seem to rest on my heart. I cannot sit before the fireplace any more, and yet Aletha will stay nowhere else. She seems to feel that even now I am not safe—that someone will pry up the great slabs and find her. I have told her the quick lime will do its awful work, but she cannot understand. Soon I must leave here. I will return to the army under another name. Ah! Heaven! that I might go home again once more! but it can never be.

October 1,—I shall leave Aletha the house—she will guard its secrets. Tomorrow I go back and Heaven send I may die fighting. There is nothing to keep me alive, nothing save a little child—a child who bears Aletha's name—she will be my care. At first

I wished Aletha to go to them, but she will not, and after all, I am glad it is so. Evelyn would like to have her near. Some way, I cannot rid myself of the fancy she is still here—still moving softly about these lonely rooms—still part of our lives. And Aletha—poor, strange, wild creature—Aletha feels the same. Strange, the blood I shed does not lie upon my conscience, but every tear of Evelyn's is like a weight to drag me down. I may atone for it all—some way—some place—God grant it. And perhaps, when I go home—ah! never again to the dear old home in the fair South land, but to that other home, perhaps I may find them waiting, smiling and happy, all quarrels and griefs forgotten, waiting for me as they used to before this awful war divided us, and once more we may be re-united. Oh! Evelyn—Robert—pray for him who loved you both too well."

With these broken sentences the manuscript ended.

The old doctor placed the sheets together and laid them silently upon the table.

"For Heaven's sake," said John, "what does that all mean?" But the old man was silent. "Tell me," he repeated, "who was she? You must know—you were there—you were his friend."

"Yes," said the old man slowly, "I was there. I was his friend."

"Then you must have seen her," begged John. "Who was she? Wife, daughter, or sweetheart? What tragedy drove her mad?"

"I can tell you nothing," said the doctor. "He was a strange man—a silent man. Those were strange, sad times, and many of us had our secrets. But this only I can swear to you—I never—in all my visits to him, saw any woman there, except Zaydee, the slave, and Aletha."

"But the shawl," cried John. "The portrait—the strange sounds!"

"I cannot explain," repeated the doctor. "Perhaps my friend was mad himself—indeed, I sometimes thought—but I saw no girl there, only Aletha."

"But surely," continued John, "there must be some connection between what is written there, and the tales of the place. And who is the girl asleep upstairs? Is she Aletha's grandniece, or—"

"That question you will have to ask Aletha," said the old doctor, slowly. "Aletha knows, but I fear she will keep her knowledge. Perhaps she has kept her own secrets all these years—poor, strange Aletha."

"And now what," said John curiously, "might you mean by that?"

"I mean nothing at all, my boy! I am but an old man whose mind wanders in the past," and the lamplight, falling across the doctor's face, showed it changed and shadowed; the cheery smile had vanished; the eyes looked dim with old memories, but while the young man noted and wondered at the change, Aunt Jane's quick feet were heard approaching and her voice called, "Come out here! There's a queer light in the sky to the north, over yonder."

Both men sprang to the door. The sky to the north was a dull rose glow which deepened as they watched.

"The glasses!" cried John. "Quick!

And seizing them, he ran to the barn, where the two followed him. They saw him throw open the window and gaze off north a moment, and then his quick steps carried him past them as they were half way across the lot.

"Give the alarm, Doctor! It's the house."

As he ran across the orchard path, a soft voice called, and turning his head he saw the slender figure running after him.

"Wait, please, wait," she begged, and he waited. "Something awful has happened I know, and I must go with you."

"There's a fire," he began. "Now, don't cry! Here, take my hand, and don't be afraid in the woods—nothing can hurt you."

After the silent passage of the woods, he saw she was crying. They could see the flames and smoke pouring from the old house and see the people massed before it.

"Oh," sobbed Evalina, "it's all burning! Aunt Aletha! I know she's burned to death. Now I have no place, no one on earth. Where can I go?"

John took her cold little hand and said gently, "You will go right back to Aunt Jane's and perhaps your aunt is saved."

But Aletha Richmond perished with the house whose dark walls she had guarded so well.

The old Shephard House burned to the ground. No one knew just how it happened.

"Sure, she was still as a corpse," said Mary Flynn, "and I thought I'd go out and feed the dog, for the poor baste was howling fierce, and I thought he might be after needing a bite. So I just stepped out and around to the back, and when I came in again, glory be, the whole place was ablaze and herself standing like a live corpse over by the mantel-piece and the fire a-roaring all around her. I couldn't get to her, for the fire was that hot."

And Mary's blistered face and burned eyebrows told she had tried. "And before I could get any help the whole inside of the house was going."

Doctor Baxter declared Mary Flynn must have been mistaken, and that the woman could not have raised herself and walked to the spot where the nurse declared she had seen her. But Mary insisted that she was there, "laughing like a maniac," and she added, crossing herself piously, "that the powers of darkness had always been in that house, and that it was a good thing it was down at last."

It was the evening of the day after the fire, when John Preston told his aunt of the strange story and showed her the old pages. After she had read them, he told her of Doctor Baxter's words, and then waited for her to speak.

"Well, I don't know," she said, after a moment's silence. "Doctor Baxter ought to know; he was there more than anyone. Still, Sam heard something, or thought he did, and he seen something, but of course we know now it could have been just the picture, but yonder's the shawl. That's real enough, and seems to me 'twould be a sight easier to paint a pertend shawl than a pertend girl." She paused for a moment and then resumed: "And Aletha always was awful queer and maybe she did have a

brother living. And I guess Shephard was half crazy, too, any way you put it. What do you think, John?"

"I don't know," returned her nephew. "I wish I could straighten it out some way. If Evalina is the granddaughter of that poor crazy girl —well—" He paused. His aunt replied.

"Well—if she is—what of it? Evalina is just as sweet and good, and smart, as any girl—and if she ain't, she's kin to Aletha—so it's about the same in the end. She's got to be *someone's* grandchild, and live and die, same as all of us, and things even up 'bout all right generally, I've noticed." She then continued, "And as for that crazy truck there, why, I'd just burn it up and get it out of the way, where it can't make any trouble—that's what I'd do."

"Then I wish you would," said John, and almost as he said the words, Aunt Jane reached for the yellow sheets and stepping briskly to the kitchen, lifted the stove lid and laid them on the coals. "There," she said, replacing the lid with a firm clash, "now, that's done."

"Why, Aunt Jane!" stammered John. "You're surely a person of action. I never dreamed you would —are they all burned?"

"Yes, they're all burned," replied Aunt Jane, firmly. "And if they're not, they will be before I lift this lid, or let you lift it. And Evalina's under the big tree out yonder. You might just step out and see if I set the chimney on fire with the trash."

And a few minutes later, the lifted lid showed only a mass of black, twisted sheets, which crumbled away into ashes at the vigorous assault which Aunt Jane made on them with the stove lifter.

John entered the other room. "I'm getting your shawl, Aunt Jane," he called. "It's a little cool for her out there."

Aunt Jane, peeking through the kitchen window, saw him tenderly wrap the old Roman shawl about the girl; saw her face lifted up trustingly to his, in the moonlight; saw—but right there Aunt Jane dropped the curtain and said with a chuckle, "Crazy grandmothers! Fiddle! They've forgotten they ever had any grandmothers."

Down in the hollow by the graveyard, the blackened ruins of the old Shephard House stood stark and grim beneath the moon. The empty windows stared like blind, dead eyes, and the charred trees threw skeleton shadows across the trampled grass. A man on horseback rode slowly down the road and paused where the iron gate swung back, broken and useless, for there was nothing to guard now—no need for locks and bars. And yet there was a stronger guard about the spot than iron gates or bars. The horseman gazed long and earnestly at the desolate place, and turned to guide his horse nearer, but the animal shook her head and refused to stir.

"Well—well—Jessie!" he said, patting her neck, "never mind, old girl, no need to go any farther. I thought I'd take a last look at it. I wonder if anyone guesses the truth of it all!" The night was chill and he shivered as the breeze stirred the pines.

"We're getting old, Jessie!" he said again, "not many more rides we'll have together, and perhaps some day, on the other side, it may be all understood and forgiven. Whoa! Jessie! Steady girl! What's that?" and he stared at a misty shape of white which floated out of the shadows by the old chimney and drifted across the grass toward the graveyard. The frightened horse swerved and carried him at a mad clatter of hoofs up the road and away. By the time her rider had mastered her, he had reasoned it all out. The wind had fanned the smouldering debris and the white shape was only a wreath of smoke tossed by the wind. He paused at the top of the hill and looked back once more.

"It is over now, Jessie!" he said to the old horse. "The old house is gone."

The wind was blowing strongly now, throwing the dust in clouds across the road and rustling the dry leaves down in the hollows. It sang a weird little sobbing song in the wires overhead and died in whispers in the woods beyond.

As the old man listened, there came a stronger gust and after it the crash and sound of falling stone.

"The walls are falling," he said. "The wind and rain will beat them down, and the snow and leaves will cover them, and little by little, it will all crumble away and be forgotten. *OUR* trust is ended, Aletha! You did not betray him. May I be as faithful to you!"

And with a sigh, the old doctor turned and rode away, leaving the ruined place to the silence and shadows, with its mysteries and secrets still its own.

Billee's Sacrifice

BY JOE BLEDSOE

BILLEE drew rein at the edge of Dead Horse canyon, and waited for the fishing party to approach.

A narrow, sinuous trail, hugging the precipitous cliffs, wound its way down to the swift little stream a mile below.

Gertrude Lanning and her father, riding slowly along, a quarter of a mile behind their guide, saw him dismount, unstrap his crutch from the saddle, and begin hopping about in the tall bunch-grass with his eyes fixed intently upon the ground.

Suddenly he made a wide swoop in the air with his broad-brimmed sombrero and pounced down upon some object in the grass not visible to the eyes of the watchers.

"Catching grasshoppers for bait," said Lanning in answer to his daughter's look of inquiry.

As they drew up, Billee hobbled to the side of the girl's pony and held out a tobacco can. "Me catch grasshopper; make fish bite quick," he said in a soft, drawling voice, using the girl's own language. Gertrude reached for the can, and raising the lid took a peep at the restless moving mass within. Stifling an impulse to scream she hastily handed the can to her father, who carefully dropped it into his fish-basket.

Billee pointed out the narrow trail to the two fishermen, and having strapped his crutch in place on the saddle, he remounted his pony.

"Thank you, Billee. Can't you come with us?" asked Lanning as the guide turned the pony's head. Billee looked longingly at the small rivulet flashing past far down in the bed of the canyon, then turned his eyes upon his questioner. "Can't fish today," he said reluctantly. "Round-up on Reservation; run cayuses to corral; brand slick-ears."

But as he lifted the reins from the neck of his pony, there welled out, from the depth of the pine forest a mile to their left, a sound that made him pause and glance uneasily at the girl and her father. The eyes of the white man met those of the guide with a significant look of understanding, while Gertrude glanced from one to the other with a perplexed look in her eyes.

Billee said something in Indian to her father, which she could not understand and rode away in the direction of the round-up corral.

Lanning vouchsafed no explanation of that strange weird sound to his daughter; but fumbled in his basket until he found the can which contained the grasshoppers. He glanced at the tin can speculatively.

"I don't believe there's enough hoppers here to last all day, Gert. You just hold my horse a minute and I'll finish filling this can."

While her father was plunging about on hands and knees, in a vain effort

to entrap the elusive hoppers, the girl took occasion to drink in the beauty of her surroundings.

They were on a prairie extending perhaps a half dozen miles in either direction, save to the west, where the fringe of timber was much closer. It was surrounded on all sides by the mighty pine forests and lofty mountains.

The ground was covered with luxuriant bunch-grass, and Gertrude, letting her gaze wander, made out several different bands of moving objects on the small plain, which she knew to be Indian horses. In several places the small prairie was cut in twain by deep, narrow gorges, inaccessible except in places where a dim trail might be located.

Off to the west, perhaps thirty miles away, but looking much nearer in the pure morning air, Mt. Adams reared its snow-capped dome toward the sky, while the figure of the big 5, half-way up its rugged side, stood out as though it had been chiseled in the hard packed snow by the hand of a sculptor.

Gertrude had counted five snow-capped peaks, and was casting about for another, when the sound of horses' feet fell upon her ear.

Turning her head, she beheld a band of squaws riding past in single file on their way to the foot of Mt. Adams to pick huckleberries.

A papoose, strapped to the back of a squaw, bobbed up and down with the motion of the pony, its beady black eyes blinking uncertainly in the bright sunlight.

A mile out on the prairie, a band of "slick-ears" had scented danger, and were making for the timber at a swift trot, their leader pausing at intervals to snuff the tainted air.

It was seldom that a white man had an opportunity to enjoy the pleasure of hunting and fishing on the Reservation for the Yakimas were none too friendly toward the light-skinned trespassers, and not taking into consideration the hostile attitude of the Indians, the vigilance of the range riders was likely to make either a dangerous and costly experiment.

But Lanning had been a range rider in the past and had always dealt fairly with the Indians. A few years back he had been a familiar figure on the Reservation, therefore the Indians made no protest when he returned every summer for a short time and flagrantly disregarded the laws which a few years before he had helped so rigidly to enforce.

No rider who ever rode the range had been more watchful and wary than he; but he had always taken off his hat to the man who could outwit him in a game of hide and seek on the Reservation, and now that his duty to the government had been fulfilled, and he no longer sported the star of the U. S. A., he took special delight in tormenting his successors. He found the pleasure of dodging the law fully as great as that of enforcing it, and his natural cunning coupled with his previous experience on the Reservation enabled him to baffle the watchful officials at almost every turn.

Two years before, a man bearing the star had, more by chance than cunning, stumbled right into the camp of the trespasser; but Lanning had scented his approach and was just

ready to move on. He assailed the employe of Uncle Sam with such a tide of palaver that for the moment the man was stricken dumb. While he was digesting the gist of Lanning's words, that gentleman was disappearing over the opposite hill, and the bewildered rider sat his horse motionless and let him go. Scarcely had he ridden from sight, when one of the rider's hounds, that had been nosing about in the scrub pines at the edge of the camp, emerged from the bushes with a large blue grouse in his mouth and laid it at the feet of his master's horse. With an oath, the man sprang to the ground and examined the bird. It had been shot. Riding furiously to the top of the hill, the rider scanned the country furtively in every direction; but he was too late. Lanning had gone.

As Gertrude turned from the marvelous view spread out before her gaze to inspect the trail which they were to descend, again that low, rolling, mournful sound reached her ears, wafted on the morning air, from somewhere out of the depths of the forest.

She noticed that her father paused in the act of bringing his hat down upon an unsuspecting hopper, and stood rigid, gazing long and earnestly in the direction of that weird, hollow sound; while a squaw who had fallen behind the rest of the band to dig for herbs and roots, rose from her occupation and scurried like a startled quail toward her pony.

The sun was down, and the still summer darkness was settling about them, when Gertrude and her father emerged from the canyon and rode toward their camp at the head of Wild Cat springs.

Up the slope a couple of hundred yards above the springs, stood a rude hut made of boards and batten,—the home of Indian Billee.

As the two riders were passing the shack, a squaw, old and wrinkled and bent almost double, shambled out of the door and made her way painfully toward a pile of chips in the rear of the cabin.

Hearing the sound of hoof-beats, she turned a gnarled and leathery face in their direction. Instinct rather than sight warned her that the intruders were not Indians and a low smouldering fire burned in the dim eyes; while a look of mingled fear and hate contorted the already repulsive face. She began gesticulating wildly, at the same time muttering in a hoarse, throaty tone in Indian jargon, while with one bony finger she pointed toward the south.

Unconsciously the girl urged her horse to a faster gait. Lanning laughed. "Old Watusa's pretty sore I guess," he explained to his daughter. "She is one Indian that never did have any sense."

"What did she mean by pointing to the south?" asked Gertrude.

"Meant that was the shortest and quickest way for us to get off the Reservation," chuckled Lanning. "But she's old and half crazy. Nobody pays any attention to her any more. Even the Indians have all deserted her except Billee and I can't see why he doesn't do likewise. I expect he will before long," continued the ex-range rider after a pause. "Is she any relation to Billee?" asked the girl.

"None that I know of," replied Lanning. "Billee's mother died when he was four years old and this old hag has taken care of him ever since; that is, till Billee got big enough to take care of himself. I think he has been taking care of her the past two or three years for she's about all in."

"Where's the boy's father?"

"Indian Charlie, or Wenopah, which was his Indian name, was thrown from a cayuse five years ago and killed. He was educated and was one of the squarest Indians that ever rode the Reservation. He wasn't altogether Indian either, for a strain of white blood flowed in his veins; but you would never have guessed it by looking at him.

"That is why Billee is different from the majority of the young bucks that you find on the Reservation. He is just crazy to go to school and get an education.

"His father taught him to speak English and had the boy's head filled with stories of white people and their ways. He had the money already saved up to send the lad away to school, when he got killed, and that accident settled the poor kid's hash as far as going to a white man's school was concerned. Even if he'd break away from that old witch back there, he has a mighty small chance of getting an education, with no one to look out for him and being handicapped the way he is; but he sure does want to go to school about the worst I ever saw," finished Lanning as they reached their camp.

The evening meal over, Lanning lighted his pipe and sprawled full-length upon the grass was telling his daughter of the queer customs and habits of the Indians, when the grass behind him rustled slightly and Billee hopped within the small circle of light, and without a word seated himself by the camp-fire.

"Hello, Billee! Where'd you come from?" asked the white man, sitting up. He more than half suspected that the boy had overheard their conversation.

"What luck?" asked Billee, ignoring the other's question.

"Bully," returned Lanning. "I caught sixty-four."

Billee turned to the girl. "How many you catch?"

"Me—oh, I only caught five," a little ruefully.

"No bite grasshopper?" inquired Billee.

"I didn't bait with grasshoppers," returned Gertrude, a little shamefacedly, remembering the eager look in his eyes when he had proffered her the can that morning. "I used salmon eggs."

Billee gave a grunt of disgust. "No good; fish no bite'm," he said and relasped into silence.

Seeing that the boy had no inclination to resume the conversation, Lanning asked, "Catch any ponies today, Billee?"

The Indian's face lighted up as he thought of the day's chase. "Good luck. We catch forty and brand fifteen slick-ears."

"What are 'slick-ears,' Billee?" suddenly asked the girl. Billee grinned. "Colts never been branded, and horses that grow up on range without ever gettin' caught. Get away every time we round-up, for maybe six, seven

year. No brand. He slick-ear."

Once more the little group became silent as the fire died down and the small blaze flickered fitfully in the night air.

As the eyes of the girl rested on the left leg of the lad's overalls, which was empty from the knee down, a great pity filled her heart, and she longed to minister to the crippled boy; to do something to make his life brighter.

Suddenly Billee raised his head, and divining the girl's look, he reached down and rolling up the empty leg of his faded overalls, secured it carefully with a sharp wooden pin.

"How did it happen, Billee?" she asked gently.

"Train run over," answered Billee holding his stump of a leg up for inspection. "My mother take me to Fall Bridge when me little boy three year old. Me play along track while she pick berries. Train come along. Poof! Poof! Stick out foot. Cut off slick."

Gertrude could hardly repress a smile at the quaint way in which her narrator told the story. She was about to question him farther, when suddenly, from out the darkness, borne to them on the wings of the night wind, there came again that low, hollow, rumbling sound, from far out over the prairie, which had so startled the man and his guide as they stood on the edge of Dead Horse canyon that morning.

Billee shuddered. Instinctively he drew nearer the fire, while his keen eye swept the moonlit plain with an uneasy glance. Again the mysterious sound reached the strained ears of the little group, seeming to increase in volume as it continued, until the very ground seemed almost to tremble, then dying away on the night air in a low, rolling discord like the last, mortal death-cry of some mammoth denizen of the forest.

Gertrude glanced from the face of the Indian boy to that of her father. That he was much disturbed, she could plainly see.

She also noted with apprehension Billee's troubled face and alert, shifting gaze.

The girl stepped to her father's side, and taking his hand asked gently, "What is it, father?" For a moment Lanning stood silent as though he had not heard. Then turning his eyes upon his daughter he said in a low tone, "I don't just know for sure, girl. I never heard the sound before this morning, but I've heard enough about the imp that's making it, if what Billee says is true and I reckon he ought to know. I had just one glimpse of that horned devil two years ago and God knows that is enough."

Suddenly the girl's hands clutched her father's arm with a vise-like grip, and a shudder which she could not repress passed over her, while a light of understanding dawned upon her.

"Mestagus!" Slowly, and half unconsciously, she uttered the word, while her eyes looked deeply into those of her father for confirmation of her suspicion. Silently he nodded his head and turned away to tether the horses nearer the camp-fire, while Billee, taking up his worn crutch, hobbled away into the night.

Gertrude turned toward her sleeping tent with an uneasy feeling which

refused to be shaken off. She recalled the many stories told by her father around their own cheerful fire at home, of this roaming terror of the Indian lands, whose cunning and ferocity had, for the past five years, defied the skill of Indian and white man alike to bring it down.

Twice that night Lanning was awakened by the snorting of the horses tethered near his tent. The second time, he arose and stepped from the tent, rifle in hand, and looked about.

By the pale glimmer of the fading stars he discerned the outline of a gigantic white shape rapidly receding into the shadows of the scrub pines which bordered the ravine.

It moved with a noiseless, gliding gait, that held the onlooker rooted to the spot. When he thought of the gun in his hand the shape had vanished into the shadows. He stood for several minutes gazing into space. As he stood thus, from out the night, far down the ravine, came a deep, weird, rumbling sound similar to the one he had heard a few hours before. Lanning shuddered and entered the tent.

After a hasty breakfast next morning, the little party again set out for the small stream at the bottom of Dead Horse canyon. Billee accompanied them for a mile out over the prairie, then left them, turning his pony's head in the direction of the round-up corral over the opposite ridge.

At noon the two fishermen ate their lunch, sitting on a huge boulder, while the fretful little stream dashed its spray in angry protest, up its rough sides, at their feet.

As Lanning rose to resume his fishing, he noticed, for the first time, the look of fatigue in his daughter's eyes. "You're tired, Gert," he said, gently lifting her from the big rock to the ground.

"Just a little, father," she admitted reluctantly. "If you don't care, I believe I'll return to camp." "All right girl, but—" and his voice took on an uneasy note, "don't stray away from camp on foot, and keep Fidget tied close."

"I'll remember, Father," said the girl, as she turned back up the stream toward the horses, which had been left tied to a stunted pine on a shelf of the canyon side.

"Take my rifle with you," he shouted after her, and Gertrude turning, waved her hand in token of understanding, then clambered on up the rough, uneven trail.

Upon reaching the horses, she paused several seconds to regain her breath.

Then, slipping her father's rifle from its holster on his saddle, she transferred it to her own, and having removed the nose-bags from the heads of the horses she untied her pony, bridled him, and tightened the cinch of her saddle.

Having first given her father's horse a loving pat on its white forehead, she mounted Fidget and turned his head up the narrow path in the direction of the open prairie.

When she at last reached the top, her pony paused of his own accord and began nibbling the tall bunchgrass.

The little prairie, bathed in the warm sunlight of the August after-

noon, seemed strangely quiet and peaceful, as the girl rode slowly along, her pony snatching mouthfuls of the rich grass.

Far up in the sky a buzzard wheeled in an ever-lowering circle toward some dead thing, at the edge of the timber, and a gaunt coyote, old and grizzled, emerged from a clump of sage brush on a little knoll and stood looking at the girl with solemn, watchful eyes.

Gertrude forgot her fears of the night before, and a glad, rippling song burst from her lips as she urged her pony to a faster gait. She purposely made a detour of half a mile in order not to pass the cabin of old Watusa, for she had no desire to incur a repetition of the old hag's wrath.

The sun was just sinking from sight behind the western peaks, his last crimson shaft tinting their lofty tops with gold, when Lanning emerged from the canyon. So engrossed did he become in watching the changing colors of the sunset that he took comparatively little notice of his horse's course. Suddenly the animal came to an abrupt halt. Lanning glanced about him and discovered that the horse had paused on the edge of Lost Creek canyon. Some distance below was the trail which led across the canyon to the camp a quarter of a mile beyond, while above, to his right, the canyon widened and the banks became accessible. A detour of a couple of hundred yards in either direction would enable him to cross, and he was in the act of turning his horse's head up the canyon, when, turning his eyes in the direction of his camp, he observed a pair of objects out on the prairie that riveted his attention.

Gertrude's pony had evidently pulled up its picket stake and was enjoying his freedom by playfully keeping the end of the long rope attached to its halter, just out of reach of the eager girl's hand as she was vainly trying to recapture the truant. Fidget, with a snort of pretended alarm, would dash off a few paces, then unconcernedly begin nibbling the tall grass again as though unaware of pursuit; but when Gertrude's fingers were in the act of closing on the coveted rope, again would come that prodigious snort, followed by another short dash, until the wilful beast had led his mistress up the slope past the Indian cabin and out on the open prairie.

Lanning smiled as he fancied Gertrude's chagrin at thus being foiled by the wily animal. He was about to gallop to her assistance, when his eye suddenly encountered another object that turned the blood in his veins to ice and caused a dreadful sickening fear to clutch at his heart, while his face went deathly white.

About two hundred yards beyond the girl and her pony, was a small depression entering the ravine in which their camp was located.

Moving up this hollow, with a slow, peculiar, side-wise motion, directly toward the unsuspecting girl, was the enormous figure of a gigantic white bull.

A slow numbness crept into his veins as the man watched with fascinated horror, that awful, moving monster which had terrorized the inhabitants of the Reservation for so long.

For a moment he slumped forward in the saddle utterly incapable of

action, while he recalled the many rumors he had heard of the depredations committed by this demon of the range.

Far larger than any other creature of its kind ever seen on the Reservation, it roamed at will, making a sound something like, yet unlike, any other cow-brute man had ever heard. Lanning knew the Indians believed the animal to be endowed with the evil spirit, and to possess supernatural powers, for neither Indian nor white man, so far as known, had yet been able to get a rope over the sharp, murderous horns.

It never molested horses or horsemen, but lurked in the edges of the timber and along the ravines, ever ready to pounce upon the unlucky wayfarer on foot, and many a luckless squaw who had ventured too far from her cayuse on a hunt for herbs and roots had been discovered later, a mangled and mutilated corpse.

Countless expeditions had been planned to hunt it down, but they had all ended in failure, for the creature's formidable bulk and fleetness of foot had defied the swiftest horses on the range to keep pace with it as it crashed its way to a place of safety, through the dwarf pines, in the heart of the forest.

Lanning groaned aloud as he realized his helplessness. At his horse's very feet yawned the canyon of Lost Creek, whose frowning, perpendicular walls defied access at that point. To skirt it in either direction in time to save his daughter was impossible. Mechanically his fingers fumbled at the empty holster of the high-power rifle strapped to his saddle.

Then he remembered, while the sweat, cold and clammy, stood out on his forehead, that the girl had taken the gun to camp.

Yet he might warn her of the impending danger; but his heart grew sick as he realized how futile would be her effort to escape, even though she became aware of her peril.

His hand paused in the act of reaching for the automatic in his belt. From over the ridge in the direction of the round-up corral, there suddenly appeared a horse and rider, standing out in bold relief against the gathering shadows. Lanning noticed in an instant the peculiar poise of the rider and a muttered prayer escaped his lips as, even at that distance, he recognized the horseman.

He saw Billee jerk his pony to a sharp halt as his keen eyes took in the situation on the prairie below him.

Even as the Indian paused, there came to the strained ears of the tortured white man, the sound of an angry challenging bellow, followed by the faint scream of the girl as she realized her danger and turned to flee.

The next instant Bunch, Billee's pony, was racing across the prairie in a mad endeavor to intercept the vicious brute ere it could reach its prey. Lanning's nerves relaxed a trifle as he noticed the direction the girl had taken was favorable to the Indian.

The seconds seemed ages to the waiting man as he sat dumb, motionless, staring straight ahead at that race for life, which so vitally concerned him; yet from which he was barred. It appeared to his agonizing gaze that all three must come together at the same instant, and a groan of an-

guish escaped his lips. Suddenly Billee's arm waved in the air over his head and then shot straight out at the massive running creature as it dashed past him.

At the same instant that Bunch went back on his haunches braced for the expected shock, the loop of Billee's lariat settled over the long wicked horns of the hideous head less than three yards from its intended victim. And the lone spectator on the other side of Lost Creek canyon saw horse and rider jerked to the ground in a huddled mass as though the Indian had roped the pilot of a fast express.

But the bull had been swerved from his course, and becoming frightened at that drawing, gripping something about his head, which he could not shake off, he made for the shadows of the timber, the saddle with its broken cinch trailing in his wake.

When Lanning reach the spot, Bunch had regained his feet and stood looking dazedly about. Gertrude was seated on the ground with Billee's head on her lap. With her handkerchief she was carefully wiping the blood from a cut over his eye. Off to one side, in the tall grass, lay a broken crutch.

That night as Billee, with a bandage about his head, hobbled to the side of the white man's camp-fire, there was a look of supreme happiness in his dark eyes. Had he not saved the life of the most beautiful white girl that had ever ventured upon Indian land? And besides, he had succeeded in getting his rope over the head of Mestagus, the horned terror of the Reservation.

When Lanning offered him money with which to replace his crutch and saddle, he flatly refused it. The crutch was already mended. He would find the saddle tomorrow. The loss of the rope did not matter.

But when the girl urged him to accompany them to their home in the valley and start to school, a great longing entered his breast.

An eager, restless light shone from the dark eyes as the white girl drew a most wonderful word-picture of the future.

When Lanning joined his daughter in urging him to come, Billee's happiness seemed complete. During the past five years of his life his one absorbing ambition had been to go to school that he might learn to speak and act like his father.

Many a long night had he lain awake, tossing restlessly in his blanket, longing for just such a chance as this to come.

He drew nearer the fire and looked up into the eyes of the man who had made it possible for him to realize his long-dreamed-of ambition, with a dog-like devotion.

Suddenly, from up the slope in the direction of the hut, there came the low, weird, sing-song chant, accompanied by the rhythmic beat of a drum.

Billee's shoulders drooped. The expectant look died out of his eyes and his cigarette burned itself out unheeded. A pine burr fell, striking the broad brim of his hat with a soft thump, and still the boy sat motionless, gazing at the dying embers of the fire.

A picture, other than the one drawn by the beautiful girl across from him, was passing before his vision: a

squaw, grown old and shriveled before her time with back-breaking labor, that she might supply the few needs of the crippled boy left in her care. Grown almost helpless, and cast aside by the tribe, her main dependence the past two years had been this same boy for whom she had so faithfully given the best years of her life. Winter would come again with its bitter cold and deep snows.

Again, the sound of that low, crooning chant was wafted on the night air to the ears of the little group. Billee rose. Looking straight across the dying fire, into the great, gray eyes of the white girl, he said quietly, "Billee no come now; maybe sometime; not now," and turning resolutely, he vanished among the shadows of the scrub pines. Pausing in front of the rude hut, he turned and stood leaning on his mended crutch, watching the glow of the little camp-fire in the ravine below.

As he stood thus, old Watusa dragged her gaunt, withered body painfully around the corner of the cabin and crouched, wraith-like, in the shadowy doorway.

Placing his hand gently on the bowed, crooked back, Billee let his gaze wander far off toward the south, where the lofty tops of the dark, somber pines seemed to reach the sky,—the direction of the white man's home and the white man's school. "Maybe sometime—sometime; not now," he repeated softly, and entered the hut.

Upon Whom the Gods First Smile

BY THURSTON WELTON

CHARLIE GILLIGAN, proprietor of the Palace, a dimly lighted saloon of the slums, watched with a cold, forbidding stare, Dopey Jimmie advance toward the free-lunch counter. From a grease-smeared glass tumbler Dopey lifted a bent fork and, with a deftness born of experience and habit, speared a section of a sea-green pickle. His other hand, working synchronously, gathered unto itself a leathery meat sandwich.

Dopey ate ravenously. He was about to dive into the bowl of cut cheese when, shifting his gaze sideways to make sure he was safe in his campaign for food, he was shocked to perceive Gilligan menacing him with a dark frown full of dire meaning.

"Hey,—Bo! This ain't Delmonico's, an' you ain't no curly-headed boy. Get me? Beat it!"

Dopey waited to hear no more. Gilligan's word was law. His hand on the swinging-door, having decided to resume his characteristic shuffle in front of the big plate-glass window, Dopey was arrested in his purpose by hearing Gilligan's deep, bass cry, "Come here, you!"

Dopey returned and paused a respectful and safe distance from the proprietor and leader of the district. Past experience had taught him the uncertainty of Gilligan's actions on such occasions. He might hand Dopey a cigar. He was just as liable to smash him a vicious blow in the face.

"What do yer want?" sullenly.

"Take these up to Pete Morellio an' say I sent them. Don't you lose them. I'll put a big dent in your hat if you do! They're tickets for the chowder party at College Point tomorrow. We expect a big push. G'wan, get a move on!"

Showing faint symptoms of rejuvenated activity, Dopey left the saloon and shambled down the street.

Dopey Jimmie was a character. All large cities are over-populated with his type. No one knew where he came from. He never told. He had no friends. His acquaintances were those who, from pity and because it was the conventional thing to do, between rounds of "lickerin' up" would throw him a five-cent piece with the advice to buy himself a drink. Once, in a maudlin fit of intoxication, he said his mother died when he was a baby and the last he heard of his father was that he *got* a twenty year *bit* at Sing Sing for walloping a prominent politician on the head with a strip of leather weighted at the end with a chunk of lead.

In appearance Dopey was small and miserably thin. His eyes were bleary and lifeless. His hair was coarse and matted and long. His face, an unhealthy color and bloated, was in perpetual need of a shave. He never wore a collar. A bone button in the

neck-band of his soiled shirt played the role of scarf-pin. The sleeves of his coat reached below his fingertips. Trousers, originally designed for a man twice his size, ruffled in tatters at his feet, which were incased in shoes improperly laced, and lacking heels.

Afternoons, Dopey stood in front of Gilligan's plate-glass window. To watch him one would imagine he was about to begin a clog-dance. Hour after hour, looking into space, he shuffled and kicked his feet, his hands lost in the depths of the pockets of the ill-fitting trousers. A battered derby, green with age, jammed down on the back of his head, served its purpose every season of the year.

Dopey's home was any accessible cellar or deserted hallway. Steady employment only merited his deep-seated scorn. By cleaning cuspidors and doing odd jobs for Gilligan he was allowed, within strict limits, the freedom of the free-lunch counter and given his portion of cheap beer. A qualitative and quantitative chemical test of his tissues would have reported, Alcohol 87 per cent. He was happy when he had a dime. A fifty-cent piece was untold wealth. A dollar, in his possession, made him apprehensive and nervous.

Yet, withal, he had a soul—or something like unto a soul—and wild desires. He anticipated future events and was capable of keen disappointment.

In Dopey's existence there were but two real events in the year: The games at Ulmer Park on the Fourth of July, and the chowder party at College Point, given by the leaders of the districts. For many long, weary days he had taxed his not over-strong brain to a point bordering on mental exhaustion to discover a means of possessing a brilliantly printed ticket admitting one on the old side-wheeler, the General Meade, and a trip to the Point, where many kegs of lager would be visible and their contents to be had for the asking, no few fights indulged in, a sail back home with a stomach alcoholically satisfied, and then the night parade to Gilligan's where everyone was sure of receiving a "blow."

Up to the present, scheme and plan as he would, Dopey had to admit failure. The tickets cost two dollars each. Only the faithful henchmen, those who never swayed from the party lines, but voted early and often and right, were given the coveted dead-heads.

Dopey delivered the package to Pete Morellio, a leader of the Italian district, a mere youth with a penchant for large, off-color diamonds and a habit of not being caught with sufficient evidence to warrant his being held for trial. His mission ended, Dopey, with a wild fluttering of his heart, trudged back to Gilligan's. A new-born hope flickered in his calloused soul.

"Did yer give 'em to Pete?" Gilligan lighted a fresh, black cigar and heavily leaned against the bar.

"Sure. An' he says, 'Thanks. Tell Charley the mob'll be there.'"

"All right," growled Gilligan. "Go over an' help yourself," indicating the free-lunch counter.

Dopey hesitated a few seconds before he mustered sufficient courage

to speak. "Say,—got a ticket to the outin' at the Point that ain't workin'? I could use it."

Gilligan turned and with an extended lower jaw menacingly looked down into Dopey's face. "Where'd you think you get off? Where'd you think a bum like you would fit in? That's why the kick-in is two bucks—to keep bums like you out! Nothin' doin'."

"Then—I don't go—unless I buys a ticket?"

"You said it, Bo!"

"Gee!" muttered Dopey, making in the direction of the free-lunch, "where'd I get two bucks? Oh! If only something would happen—anything!—I just can't stay home an' see the boys all goin'. I just can't!"

Yet his heart was heavy and hope seemed dead.

To the uninitiated, many laws seem without purpose or sense. One of the city ordinances direct that all attempted suicides be placed under arrest. After his life is saved the victim is sent to the nearest hospital. There he is guarded by an officer of the law, who is responsible for his person and safe appearance before a magistrate in court. Knowing that a jail sentence is no cure for a desire to end one's earthly existence, the court delivers to the prisoner a stereotyped lecture on the evils of self-murder, and discharges him. The last is routine.

And so on the evening of Dopey's day of disappointment, with an ill-will, Officer Carney sat at the foot of Edmund Tate's cot in the Williamsburgh Hospital and guarded his prisoner. The night before, Edmund Tate had attempted suicide by jumping into the sewer-laden waters of the East River. A watchman on a coal-scow pulled him from a damp grave with the aid of a boat-hook. A policeman and an ambulance-surgeon aided Tate in finding himself, when he came to, in the general charity male ward of the hospital.

The ward was hot that night and the steam-room of the laundry, which was directly underneath, did not add to the comfort of the inmates. Sixteen white enamelled cots met the visitor's eyes. The internes, fresh from college, named it the "Rummy Ward." Another favorite title for the unattractive room was, "The Bums Palm Beach." The driftwood of the slums, the wrecks of humanity living on charity, found the general charity male ward a haven during the cold winter months. To get the last flea from a Mexican dog would be child's play as compared to the efforts required to discharge from the ward a boarder, once he was registered in the hospital records.

That night the raucous, flickering lights gave but a suggestion of illumination. In the far corner two chronics played seven-up with a torn, soiled pack of cards. A wreck of a boy, raving with the D. T's., struggled to free himself of the restraints. An old man, his leg in a plaster-cast, read a week old newspaper. A fat man, dying of apoplexy, breathed heavily behind a screen. Three patients loudly snored in different keys. An orderly slept sitting up on a straight-backed chair.

Edmund Tate sat on the edge of his

bed and idly swung his legs over the side. Sitting in a comfortable invalid's chair, facing Tate, was Officer Carney. His eyes shot fire.

"If it wasn't for you and your kind I'd be at the house this minute having a bit of a time with the boys. I'd be on reserve and enjoying a game of dominoes."

"Well, beat it! Who's keeping you here? I'm not!" Tate replied sneeringly, playing the while in a nervous manner with his fingers.

"You're not?" Carney cried. "Who the devil, then, do you think is keeping me here getting baked alive in this rotten smelling joint? If they bring any more down from the operating-room I'll be groggy for a week from the fumes of the ether."

"Go out and take a nice long walk. It'll do you good. The doctor recommends fresh air and lots of nourishing food. I'll be here when you come back. Who'd want to make a get-away from a swell place like this?"

"Is that so? I'd hate to turn me back on you! No! You wouldn't pull anything raw. Oh, no! Ugh! you make me sick!" Carney made a wry face to show his disgust.

"Can't I go out to the bathroom?" pleaded Tate. "I'm dying for a smoke. Why can't I?"

"Nothing doing. Can't you read the signs stuck all over the place, 'No Smoking Allowed'?" Then in a sort of weary voice, "Besides, I got a fierce cold in me throat and have to cut it out for a few days."

Officer and prisoner sat in silence for several minutes. A nurse tiptoed in the ward, awoke the slumbering orderly, and send him to a distant part of the building. "You're as cheerful as a rain-soaked piece of funeral crepe," growled Tate.

"And that'll be all from the likes of you!" sharply from Carney.

Half an hour passed, Officer Carney still glaring at his trust, who continued to swing his legs over the side of the bed. Finally, Tate became interested in the ravings of the D. T., and Officer Carney closed his eyes. In a few seconds the guardian of the peace was in the Land of Nod.

Suddenly, Tate brought Carney to his senses by exclaiming, "Say—do you know what'd go good now?"

"What?" queried Carney.

"A cold bucket of beer!"

"You're human," with admiration from Carney. "Why didn't you mention it before? Maybe you're bashful and sensitive."

"I'm a slow thinker. But I've had it on my mind all evening."

"Well, think again, and tomorrow tell me who'll go up to Gilligan's and get it?"

"Send the orderly."

"He's busy in the private rooms. Think again."

"Go yourself. I won't beat it. One of the patients here can watch me. That's fair, ain't it?"

"I might be seen. Can't take a chance. This reform administration is bugs on us guys."

"Speaking for myself," continued Tate, in dulcet tones, "about three pints of cold, frothy lager would make me think of home and mother."

"Listen!" Officer Carney spoke in a friendly tone. "What'd you try to do the Dutch for, anyhow?"

"Forget it. It was all a horrible

mistake. It's a sort of a habit with me every time I get a fine young bun aboard. I mistake the river for a feather-bed. On the level!"

"It's no joke making the likes of us guard you guys, and you'll get a discharge, in the morning." A long silence. Then, "I don't want to get in bad. Understand me? I could be broke—put off the force, if it was found out. These reform grafters would hand me the limit—a dishonorable discharge. How about you going up to Gilligan's and getting a pail-full?"

Tate jumped from the bed in surprise. "He's got brains," he cried, "brains! But you ought to see his brother! He's the boy."

"Don't make such a howl. You'll be disturbing the patients. I'll get the nurse to give you your clothes." Carney spoke with suppressed enthusiam. "Go out the side way, by the ambulance door." Then, looking into Tate's eyes, Carney continued with a grim deliberation, "But remember, you come back, or I'll be in bad, and if I get in bad you'll wish you'd gone down for the third and last time. Remember what I'm telling you. You come back! Get me?"

"Soft pedal that sad stuff. You're breaking me all up," whimpered Tate. Then in a confidential manner, "You'd better be doing some exercising and getting up a thirst for that what's coming."

"And you really think that's necessary?" Carney laughed as Tate noiselessly slipped from the ward.

Tate made haste for Gilligan's. He entered the saloon by way of the front door. Crossing the barroom, he did not linger before the frosted mirrors, but continued on his way and made an exit *via* the Family Entrance. Again on the street, he hastened his progress —but not in the direction of the hospital. Edmund Tate had betrayed the confidence of his guardian.

Officer Carney walked to the diet kitchen and, seven minutes later, wandered back to the general charity male ward. When fifteen minutes had passed, he went to the morgue connected with the hospital, and asked the assistant ambulance driver to go to Gilligan's and return with Tate. He feared his prisoner was lingering with one foot on the brass rail.

The assistant ambulance driver reported Tate among the missing. Carney admitted the worst had come to pass. For three minutes he made the air vibrate with artistic language. "Mule conversation," one of the chronics, at the end of the ward, called the tirade.

Realizing his charge had vanished and knowing, full well, that unless the impossible happened, his days on the force were numbered, Officer Carney did some quick thinking and finally decided upon a well-formulated plan of action.

"Say—you!" to the assistant ambulance driver, "go to the corner, or to the Bedford Lodging House, and bring me one of the bums. Get one well oiled. The worse—the better. And hurry!"

Officer Carney stood in the shadows of the corridor and looked a picture of despair.

The assistant ambulance driver, who was satisfied with his monthly

wage of eighteen dollars because he could steal all the morphine he craved without fear of detection, arrived at Gilligan's. Dopey Jimmie, still hoping his earnest wish might be realized, was doing his wonted shuffle in front of the big plate-glass window.

The assistant ambulance driver touched him on the shoulder. "You're to come to the 'ospital. The cop wants you."

"What cop?" Dopey bent his head to one side. It was his manner of playing shrewd.

"Carney!"

"What's he want of me?"

"He didn't say. Just told me to find you and bring you along." Dopey knew that resistance was useless.

"All right," from Dopey without emotion. "Say—you going to the chowder party tomorrow? I'd give me shirt for a ticket. Know where I could get a ticket—for nothin'?"

They entered the hospital.

"Hello, Jimmie!" greeted Carney.

"What'd you want me for? I ain't done nothin'."

"Sit down, Jimmie. I want to talk to you." To the returned orderly, "Give Jimmie a drink. It's good beer, Jimmie. Go as far as you like." Dopey drained the pail. When he had ended, Officer Carney continued, "Want to make a couple dollars, Jimmie?"

A sudden shock affects different people in various ways. And a chance to become sole owner of two dollars was a distinct shock to Dopey. When he sensed the import of the words, he had a panic of fear lest he was experiencing a wonderful dream and shortly would open his eyes to view a musty cellar and dirty coal-bins, the dumping ground of a cold-water tenement house.

When he admitted he was awake and that an officer of the law was offering him an opportunity of earning such a vast sum, his meagre mind saw himself the proud owner of a brilliantly printed piece of cardboard entitling the holder to all the benefits (and otherwise) of the yearly chowder party to be held at College Point.

He pictured himself being handed a white cotton yachting cap by Gilligan, also, a thin cane, to be twirled in a grandiose manner. All the "gang" wore yachting caps and carried canes on the way to the picnic grounds. Two dollars! Dopey's heart furiously beat beneath his elephantine coat. His unspoken prayers had been answered. The Gods had smiled upon him. Tomorrow, the day of days, he would not be forced to linger about Gilligan's alone, like an old-timer in a forgotten, deserted mining camp, but would be with the real folks making merry on the city's edge. Two dollars!

Not receiving an answer and thinking that, true to his cognomen, Dopey had been slow to sense the offer, Carney repeated his proposal: "Want to pick up two easy bones?"

Dopey returned to consciousness. "Stop kiddin' me," he grinned.

"It's yours, Dopey—easy money."

"What have I got to do—croak a guy, or something?"

"Listen." Carney was all seriousness. "Get me straight. You stay here with me tonight—here—in this room. Your name is Edmund Tate—Edmund Tate! Get it? You occupy

that bed," pointing to the empty cot. "In the morning you will come with me and appear before Magistrate Bryant. Now don't get excited! You bums is all queer. You simply plead guilty to attempted suicide: You jumped in the river; you were despondent and out of work. If you make your story strong and convincing, Bryant's likely to slip you a fiver. He's a charitable kind of bloke. Many a bum, with the discharge, has got a five spot out of him. Just make your story get to him. If you put it over there's two more bucks—two more—I'll slip you on the outside. Get me?"

Dopey did not answer. How could he? The shock was complete. The vision of so much wealth played havoc with his anæmic brain cells. Two dollars for a ticket! If he got to the judge there might be five more. Anyway, if he put it over, Carney would have another two spot for him. Dopey's star was in the ascendant. In his mind's eye he was on the boat and mingling with the swell "push." He saw himself edging his way into the inner circle, near the engine-room, and joining the "crap" game. He was "fading" and talking to the dice. He won! His turn to charm the "bones." The dice stopped rolling as he snapped his fingers. Seven! He won. Seven, again! Again, seven! Six, the point. He makes it! He has sixteen dollars now. The boat makes fast to the dock. They are at College Point,—seven o'clock and all are "feeling good." A free fight starts. With a sense of keen satisfaction, he looks on and hopes ' will be as good as the one he heard about that occurred three years before. Eleven of the gang had to be taken to the hospital. They start for home. There is fighting and singing and laughter, and empty bottles are thrown, with a reckless abandon, into the swift waters of Hell Gate. Gilligan passes by and nods to Dopey, who smokes a big, fat cigar. They are marching, an uneven, stumbling line, to Gilligan's. As they near the saloon red fire burns. Women and children hang out of the tenement windows and cheer. They pack in at the bar. Dopey works his way to the rail. "Hey! Alex!" to the bartender. "Fill 'em up. Ask 'em *all* what they'll have!" He is treating the gang. His day is complete.

"Have you got the dope?" asked Carney, bringing Dopey back to mundane things. "Understand what you're to do? You're Edmund Tate and—"

"Sure! I got you— Where's the two beans?"

"You'll get them tomorrow."

"What time tomorrow?" Dopey plainly was suspicious.

"About ten thirty—as you come from the court-room. What have you got to worry about? There'll be four iron men waiting for you."

"They start around two o'clock," from Dopey, in an absent-minded way.

"Who starts? What you talking about?"

"What do you think? The chowder party! You're going, ain't you? Everybody 'll be there."

"Sure. I'm going. You going?"

"Betcha life, I'm going. It'll be some party—SOME PARTY—believe me!"

"Had the best time I ever had in me life at the party three years ago," confided Carney.

"I hears the one tomorrow 'll have 'em all skinned to death. Say, how about another can o' suds?"

Officer Carney and Dopey Jimmie, beg pardon, Edmund Tate, sat until the first gray streaks of dawn lighted the general charity male ward, drained many cans of beer and talked, at great length, of the approaching chowder party at College Point.

The next morning, the officer and his prisoner left the hospital and rode in a noisy patrol-wagon to the magistrate's court.

"This bum 'll get me out of a fine mess," confided Carney to the orderly, "if he don't scramble the eggs. I'll break his jaw if he begins to show the yeller. Hard to trust these guys. They're bad!"

"It's going to be a fine day. Gee! We're lucky it ain't raining," from Dopey, as he and his guardian entered the court-room.

At sixteen minutes after ten the clerk of the court called Edmund Tate to the bar.

Officer Carney poked Dopey in the ribs and urged, in an undertone, "Make it strong. Remember—four bucks if you do as I told you."

"Edmund," began Magistrate Bryant, "it appears you tried to end your life."

"Yes, Your Honor."

"And why should a man like you attempt suicide?"

"Your Honor, I was out of work. Couldn't find nothin' to do for five months an' I didn't have no place to sleep an' nothin' to eat. So I lost me nerve an' threw meself in the drink."

A look of intense satisfaction flooded Officer Carney's face. The bum was doing better than he had anticipated. He would give him two dollars. Two dollars and not another cent! It was more than enough for such "Santa Claus" work.

"I'm sorry for you, my man," from the Magistrate, writing something on a large sheet of paper. "These are hard times. We, all of us, must be charitable."

Magistrate Bryant paused in his address to the prisoner to catch the eye of a court attendant. The attendant went to the Magistrate's side. A short, whispered conversation was held, which Dopey could not hear, but he did see His Honor pass a ten dollar bill to the attendant, who hurriedly left the room.

"Here's where I get the fiver," thought Dopey. The Gods were smiling. It was his lucky day.

Officer Carney, also, saw the passing of the ten dollar certificate. He concluded not to give Dopey a cent. Five dollars was a lot of money for a bum to have—all at one time.

"A man in your position is to be pitied," resumed the Magistrate. "No work! No place to sleep! Nothing to eat! I am going to do all in my power to restore your lost confidence in yourself and your fellow man." The Magistrate put the pen aside. On the wall of the courtroom was a large clock. Its hands pointed to ten twenty-nine. "In about four hours," cogitated Dopey, "Gilligan 'll be givin' out the hats an' canes."

"My man," the Magistrate looked in a fatherly way at Dopey, "I should be severe with you. However, these

cases require kindness. I am going to help you. I trust you will appreciate my act and, some day, do something worthy of the best that is in you. I am going to see that you have a bed to sleep in, nourishing food to eat, steady employment—"

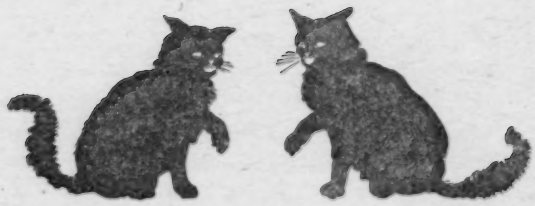
Dopey Jimmie threw Officer Carney a sly wink from the corner of his eye.

The court attendant returned, advanced up the aisle to the bench and stood waiting for the Magistrate to end his discourse before attracting his attention. Dopey watched the court attendant as though hypnotized. He again glanced at the big clock on the wall. "In ten minutes," he unconsciously figured, "I'll cash in. Come you dollar bills!"

He was brought to the immediate present with a mental jerk.

"Edmund Tate," concluded the Magistrate, crisply, "the Court sentences you to Blackwell's Island, at hard labor, for six months!"

As Dopey Jimmie, whose mind was in a state of aphasia from the shock of the cruel and sudden blow, was led back to the pen, the court attendant went to His Honor's side and handed him a fresh cut of Virginia chewing tobacco and nine dollars and ninety cents in change.



The Shadow Cross

BY KATHLEEN L. WORRELL

ONE day when I was aimlessly walking through the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, whom should I see but Hallam standing in front of a glass case, gazing with wrapt attention at the mummy of an Egyptian Princess. I am always meeting him in the most unexpected places. Once I found him sitting at the base of the pyramid of Gizeh with his shoes off, toasting his toes in the sun; another time I came across him in the Grand Canyon perched on a rock, cooking himself a cup of cocoa over a pocket alcohol stove.

He is one of the many idle globe trotters who spend their lives and their money in the pursuit of things that folks who have a living to make never give a thought to. Hallam's hobby is delving into the mystical. He likes to mess around in old tombs, and pyramids, and catacombs, and that sort of thing. Some of his friends believe that he has even entered the forbidden gates of the sacred city of Tibet. I don't, because Hallam is altogether too fond of life to take any chances. He and I like each other, but we belong to what a popular novelist calls different soul circles. According to his phraseology our auras do not blend. He once told me that he believed me capable of furnishing a house with American-made antiques.

"Why not?" I retorted. "I like the designs of the old pieces, but deliver me from their moth-eaten mustiness. Give me nice, clean, freshly varnished things every time."

"Of course!" he said.

If I were being paid by the word for this story, I should like to write down all Hallam put into those two words; it would fill ten pages. He has a way of conveying the impression that my soul is so dry that it must rattle inside of me when I walk, but for all that I certainly was glad to see him that day in the Metropolitan Museum. I knew that if anyone in the world could explain the shadow cross, he could, and I had been thinking and fretting about it so long that it was beginning to get on my nerves. It was the only thing I had ever encountered that I could not explain in a natural way. The more I thought about it, the more uncanny it seemed. Sometimes I got furious with myself because I could not forget it. I tried in vain to banish it from my thoughts. My only hope lay in Hallam. I rushed up to him.

"You are the very person I want to see!" I cried. "I have something on my mind."

"You have?" He exclaimed with unflattering incredulity.

"Yes," I said, "I have. Come into the park and let us sit on a bench under the obelisk,—sitting under the obelisk is a concession to your taste. I have always hated the thing; it looks

as if it might topple over any minute."

"Is that what is on your mind?" asked Hallam.

"No," I said, "it is not, but a woman has to do just so much talking before she can get to the subject uppermost in her thoughts. You ought to know that by this time. What I want to tell you is that I have been to Mexico since I saw you last. I visited the Señora Consuelo Elverado Torres, in the *quinta* of her father, the notorious old Don Manuel Elverado who—"

"You did!" broke in Hallam with a sudden show of interest.

"Don't interrupt me with foolish exclamations," I said. "Listen to what I have to tell you, and if you can find a sensible explanation for the one thing beyond the natural that has ever come to my notice, I will bless you forever."

"You have blessed me enough—" began Hallam, but I cut him short. "I was never more in earnest in my life," I went on. "The thing is wearing my nerves to a frazzle. It is robbing me of sleep. I want to be able to explain things in a natural way, but how on earth can one explain the shadow cross?"

"I don't know," he said. "Perhaps if you were to tell me what it is—"

"I will if you will give me a chance," I snapped. "When Señora Torres invited me to visit her, I was delighted. I had always wanted to go through the *quinta;* it is a wonderful place more than a century old, and while I don't care for old furniture, and old tombs, and old houses," I said, giving him a level glance, "I do like old gardens."

"How about people," he interrupted. "I am almost—but no! I cannot bring myself to tell."

"You needn't," I said. "I know without your telling. You are five years older than I am."

"Go on with your story," said Hallam.

"I had another reason for wanting to go to the *quinta.* I had heard so many strange stories about Don Manuel Elverado that I was anxious to see him. After having for years been the richest, meanest, most inhuman old brute in all the State of Sonora, he suddenly became a saint. He is the exception to the rule that human beings do not change, that they only seem to. Something happened to him—something so terrible that it changed him in a day into the kindest man I ever knew."

"I don't believe it," said Hallam. "Nothing could be terrible enough to do that. I once saw him in one of his fine rages. You can't tell me! I happened to be in the chapel on his estate when he rushed in there just too late to prevent his daughter marrying a man who evidently was not his choice. My word, how he raved! It gives me gooseflesh even now to remember it though it is all of seven years ago."

I grasped Hallam's shoulder and shook him. "That was when it happened!" I cried.

"It probably was," said he. "Things did seem to be happening."

"Stop talking and listen," I scolded. "I am going to tell you the strangest thing you ever heard in all your life. I wouldn't believe it if I hadn't heard it from Don Manuel's own lips. He

told it to me one evening when we were sitting out in the *patio*. It was one of those wonderful tropical nights that make people want to turn their hearts inside out. He threw back his white hair and touched his forehead. 'Here,' he said, 'is where the hand of God has fallen.' Then he went on and told me how, long ago, his heart was set on having his only daughter marry Señor Miguel, a man well born, rich, and old enough to make a sensible husband. The girl did not seem to take kindly to the plan, but he told himself that she was still young, the time would come when she would see the wisdom of his choice.

"Then his new private secretary, young Juan Torres, came to the *quinta* to live. Juan was a handsome lad with the face and voice of a trouvère when he sat strumming his guitar on the stone bench by the fountain. One night Don Manuel could not sleep, so he walked around in the *patio*. Presently he came upon two people standing under a palm tree. The man was Juan Torres. When the woman in his arms lifted her head he saw that it was Consuelo."

"Of course," said Hallam. "What could he expect? It was the natural thing to happen."

"But the old man did not see it that way—old men don't," I said, glancing sideways.

"Alas, no," sighed Hallam. "When I grow old—"

"Let me finish my story!" I snapped. "When Don Manuel realized how things were, he raged of course; banished Juan Torres from the house, and the girl from his sight. He even took it out on Juan's old father: drove him out of his abode hut, and sent him hobbling out of the *hacienda* with his two goats behind him. After the old man got off the estate, he lifted his hands to heaven and loudly called the wrath of God down on the proud head of Don Manuel Elverado.

"When Don Manuel heard about that he went in person to have it out with the old *peon*, but the way was long, and the sun was hot; he began to feel sick and had to be taken home. While he was in bed, Juan and Consuelo met and took their troubles to the Padré. And the Padré, seeing no other way out of the muddle, took them into the little chapel under the alamo trees and married them. A *peon* who saw what was going on ran in and told her father.

"Don Manuel forgot all about being sick. Like a madman he rushed over to the chapel. He said that rage made him so strong that with one hand he flung aside a stranger who blocked the entrance. He rushed up to the altar just too late; they were man and wife.

"He told me that the devil must have entered into him then. Gone in an instant was the religious training of years. With wanton hands he tore the cross down from the altar and threw it at their feet. 'Take that!' he shouted. 'It is all you will ever get from me!'

"At that, the mild Padré denounced him in such burning words that, in spite of himself, his anger began to die down before a superstitious fear. Trembling at the thought of the sacrilege he had committed, he stumbled out of the chapel, first pausing at the

holy water font to make the sign of the cross on his forehead.

"What happened then was so awful that Don Manuel told it to me in a whisper. He went to his room and sat down in front of a big mirror. The noonday sun was streaming full in his face. Suddenly he noticed that a faint mark was appearing on his forehead. Very dim at first, but quickly growing darker; soon another mark began to show, and in gasping horror he saw that a cross was being written on his brow! Frantically he tried to rub it off, to wash it out. It seemed to be a part of him. Then, in terror, he called the servants and in their frightened eyes he read that they too, could see the cross which he at first believed to be the vision of a disordered brain. 'And then,' said Don Manuel, 'the heart in my breast melted, and my spirit was broken, for I knew that the hand of God had fallen on me.'

"He sent for Juan and Consuelo, and on his knees asked their forgiveness. He even sent for Juan's old father, gave him another house and all the goats he cared to take, and asked for his prayers. From that time on, Don Manuel spent his days doing good, and in time the shadow cross began to fade and then vanished altogether. By that sign Don Manuel knew that at last he was forgiven. And that is the story," I said, "and I want you to explain to me how a thing like that could happen, can you?"

There was a queer look in Hallam's eyes when he turned to me. "Yes," he said, "I can."

I gave a sigh of relief. "Go on," I urged. He did not seem to hear me. His eyes were looking off over the tree tops to where the afterglow gleamed mistily golden above the blur of the city.

"Why don't you speak?" I cried impatiently.

He looked at me with a kind of tender softness in his face, that surprised me. "Dear lady," he said, "before I solve the riddle of the shadow cross, I am going to tell you something: Don't try to explain everything that comes into your life. When you look at a really great picture, don't try to figure out what kind of paint the master used, and how much it took to cover the canvas. Try to grasp the dream he had and let it go at that. If you will only learn to sift the chaff of the things that are, out of the grain of the things that seem to be, believe me, you will some day find an altogether wonderful garden growing in your heart."

I thought that over for a moment. "Are you going to tell me?" I asked.

"Of course I am," he said. "But it would be ever so much better if you would always think of Don Manuel Elverado as a man who got a change of heart because the hand of God fell on him. That is what he believes, and that is what makes the difference in his life."

"Please tell me about the cross," I begged.

"You are a spoilt creature," he said, giving me a look that somehow seemed to wipe the lines out of my face and the years out of my heart.

"If I must tell, I must. This is how it happened. Some six or seven years ago I spent considerable time

in Mexico. I had a friend down there, a chemist, of whom I saw a lot. One day when I was in his laboratory, he happened to want some nitrate of silver. I offered to get it for him. It was a hot day and I took the short cut through the alamo grove on Don Manuel Elverado's estate. When I came to the little chapel I looked in. It was a restful, cool retreat. I sometimes went in there to spend a quiet half hour. I saw that something unusual was going on; the Padré was marrying a young pair who were kneeling on the altar steps. The next thing I knew, I was being flung aside by an old man who came rushing in like a full-grown cyclone. The vial of nitrate of silver I held in my hand fell with a crash into the holy water font that happened to be almost dry. As you probably know, when nitrate of silver is mixed with water the solution is colorless and pure. But if exposed to the light and air it makes a dark, and almost indelible strain.

"In the excitement of the scene I did not think about that until after Don Manuel had left the chapel. Then I turned back and wiped the font dry with my handkerchief, but Don Manuel, it seems, had the nitrate on his brow, and I can imagine how he felt when he saw it slowly turning from the merest shadow to a black cross on his forehead. And that, dear lady, is the solution to the shadow cross,—just a bit of carelessly handled chemical. I mean, that is the solution of the mark on his brow, but no man living can solve the wonder of the mark that was burned into the old man's heart. And that, after all, is the great mystery."

I sighed. "Hallam," I said, "it's a gray old world after all, isn't it?"

"It's nothing of the kind!" he cried gaily, and before I knew what he was about, he raised my hand to his lips and kissed it. I was so confused that I said the most cutting thing I could think of: "There is no fool like an old fool!"

"You are right," said Hallam solemnly. "The only wonderful, glorified, heaven-reaching fools, are the ones who are old enough to see the folly of being wise, and the vanity of trying to find anything but happiness! If you don't believe me turn around and ask the obelisk behind you. It ought to know because it has looked down on all kinds for more than a thousand years."

Nature and the Mirror

BY JOHN ALAN HAUGHTON

HEN Preston came out of the theatre, it was just beginning to rain and instinctively he spread out his hand to see if it were worth while to put up his umbrella. He had been in the East barely a week and so had not had time to grow used to the climatic peculiarities so different from those on the coast.

It was years, ten at least, since he had been in New York, but in those ten years he had gained fame and fortune, for more than one of his novels had been a "best seller" in all the large cities. His books appealed to all classes for the reason that they were many sided. People fond of adventure found clever plots carefully worked out; his love scenes made the most æscetic breathe quickly; for sparkling dialogue one had to look no farther than any page of "Hermione Wardor," and the philosophical passages in this same novel awakened the interest of learned professors from more than one university and called down upon his head much cursing as another arch-priest of the Ego.

Preston was amused rather than annoyed by all this and in order to add fat to the fire he had in his play founded on this story, from the first rehearsal of which he was just being released, put speeches into the mouths of his characters, warranted to prove very annoying to the altruistic, but very comforting to those who shared his views on the subject of Self.

He stood on the pavement in front of the theatre, looking up and down the street. It was late in the afternoon and crowds were hurrying along anxious to get away from the more or less unpleasant quarters where a day's work had been done. The myriad electric signs, which give the Great White Way its name, were beginning to burst forth here and there, and on all sides there was that expectant bustle of preparation for the evening's work or play, as the case might be.

It was an odd sensation to Preston to stand in a large crowd and yet be recognized by no one. In San Francisco, even the newsboys knew him by name, and for a man without a relative in the world he had a most unusual number of acquaintances, but few friends. Here though, all was different. He had, true enough, a large sheaf of letters to persons of every class and he had only to send in his card to the editor of any one of a dozen magazines, to have every courtesy extended him.

There was time enough for that, however, as he had pulled up stakes in the West and was about to settle in New York. The day before he had rented a small furnished apartment until his boxed up things should arrive. For the present the rehearsals of his play occupied all his time and attention and he had no leisure to give

to calls. Still, he did miss having people look at him in the cars and then whisper to their neighbor behind fans or newspapers what obviously was, "That is Preston."

Having decided that the rain was going to increase and continue, Preston opened his umbrella and started down Broadway. His apartment was in a quiet street east of Fifth Avenue and not far away, so he walked leisurely along, stopping now and then in spite of the rain, to look into a shop window.

It was almost dark when he got to the apartment house and the clerk was just turning on the lights in the office. He looked up as the door opened.

"Oh! is that you Mr.—Mr. Preston?" he said. "I didn't see you go out."

"No?" answered Preston vaguely.

"Find the key all right?" went on the youth.

"Key? Oh, yes," said Preston, without any idea of what the other was talking about.

The apartment, which was on the ground floor, extended from the front of the building to the court in the centre. The bedroom gave on the court and the sitting-room upon the street. On opening the door, Preston paused for a moment, wondering whether he would decide to keep the apartment and store his own furniture or rent another one at once. A few moments' meditation brought him to no decision, so he went on into the sitting-room, took off his coat and threw himself into a large armchair before the wood fire, which he accepted as being there, although he did not remember having lighted it.

He was very tired. How stuffy the theatre had been! Managers were even less considerate of their own people than they were of their audiences. The leading lady made a fairly convincing "Hermione Wardor," but the leading man was rank! Something would have to be done. He felt like seeing people. Should he go to call on some of the folk to whom he had been given letters, or should he not? Less trouble to stay here. Boy in the office could send to a restaurant for dinner for him. Gracious, what hideous wall paper! Those cornucopias on the frieze might empty out on him at any moment!

His brain drawled on in a similar strain for some time and he was conscious of talking half to himself and half aloud, he did not know for how long, when the feeling that someone else was in the room, made him look up.

A man was standing in the doorway looking at him. His head was bare and his whole air of at-homeness made Preston look around the room to see if by chance he had mistaken his door. No, there were letters on the table addressed to him and he recognized the top one.

"I beg your pardon," he said, rising.

"Oh, don't mention it," answered the stranger; "you are Mr. Preston, the author?"

"I am. May I ask—?"

"Who I am? Certainly, but it would not convey any idea to you."

"What I was about to say," interrupted Preston, irritated by the coolness of the man, "was, may I ask what you are doing in my apartment?"

"Sit down," invited the man.

"Thank you," answered Preston; "I prefer to stand."

The stranger drew his right hand from behind his back. It contained a small pistol. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Preston?" he repeated.

Preston wheeled around the chair he had been sitting in, and sat down. After all, it was wiser to humor the intruder, whoever he was. The man drew up a chair to the other side of the writing table and sat also, keeping Preston covered by the revolver.

"Well," said Preston, "what can I do for you?" There was something familiar in the man's appearance—had he seen him before somewhere? Even his clothes looked familiar.

"Mr. Preston," answered the man, "I am going to kill you."

"Ah!" answered Preston coolly, "why?"

The stranger ignored the question and went on:

"Do you notice anything unusual about me?"

"Not unusual exactly, but there is something familiar about your appearance. Have we ever met before?"

"Look in your mirror over the mantel."

Preston looked and involuntarily uttered an exclamation. The man was his exact double. This was odd. Who could the fellow be?

"You see, Mr. Preston, the resemblance is exact. My plan is this,—I intend to kill you and take your place in the world."

"*Can* you do it?"

"I think so. So far my plan has worked all right. The clerk in the office let me in here without the slightest hesitation. I told him I'd forgotten my key."

"Oh, that explains—"

"Yes,—did he say something to you about it? You see, I shall have no difficulty whatever in passing myself off as Harley Preston. You don't know me, but I have known you for years and from the first time I saw you I have known that I could turn our resemblance to my profit if I chose. So, every time I've seen you, I have made the very closest study of your manner down to the finest detail and I have read everything you have written. At one time I held a position in your bank in San Francisco, and this enabled me to see every cheque you drew, so that now I can copy your signature exactly and in time I shall be able to duplicate your writing; you, yourself, would not recognize the forgery."

"There are many other ways of identifying a man than by his signature."

"Not so many, when a man has no relatives in the world, which I know to be the case with you; when the resemblance is so remarkable as that between you and me, and when the intruder is in full possession of all the most important facts of the other's existence—"

"How can you—?"

"My dear Mr. Preston, there are other students of human nature besides yourself. I felt perfectly certain that a man of your unparalleled egoism, egotism, whichever you choose to call it—you shrug? Why, I thought you boasted of the fact; however, I felt sure you kept a diary, so the minute I gained admittance here,

VOLUME TIGHTLY BOUND

I searched until I found it. I know my Wilkie Collins well, so I read your diary and have even made notes of the things which may be important to remember—no, don't move, I don't want to shoot you unless I have to—I've a much better way."

"I wouldn't shoot if I were you, the report could easily be heard in the office and it might cause inquiries."

"No matter. By the time anyone came, you, or what there was left of you, would be carefully hidden away and Mr. Preston, opening the door, would explain to whomever came, that he carelessly discharged his pistol while cleaning it. Too easy, isn't it?"

"Wherever did you get your idea for this ghastly scheme?"

"Ghastly? Oh, Mr. Preston! This from you! Have you forgotten how you commenced 'The Fifth Dimension,' wasn't it? 'Every man in this world of ours, has a right to whatever he can get. We have not improved our social conditions in the least since the days when,—

> Let him take, who has the strenght
> And let him keep who can,

was the order of things.' When I, the poor, underpaid bank clerk read this I resolved that *I* should take what I had the strength, or, to speak in twentieth century values, the wit to take, and that I should take it from you. I have lived all my life on the husks of things, I, a man with as keen a sense of the beautiful as any man alive. I've had to content myself with seeing other people's beautiful things while living myself in such sordidness as you have no idea of. God! how I laughed at your attempt at describing poverty in 'The Barren Fig-tree,' you who have had the best the world has to give ever since you opened your eyes on it! Now *I* am going to have a show at that best. Move now, if you dare!" then, more quietly, "I don't want to shoot you unless I have to and in any case there are some things I'd like the pleasure of telling you."

"You fiend! have you no humanity about you, no feeling for your fellow creature?"

"None. I knew all your theories of the importance of self, were mere cant. You hold those theories for yourself but not for others. I guessed as much, and I wanted to see how low I could make you sink, but I did not think you would stoop to such apostasy as to deny the very things that have placed you where you are.

"Within an hour you will be lying hidden somewhere about here dead. Later, when everything is quiet, toward morning, I will dress your corpse in a sailor's rig I've brought, hammer in the back of your head and perhaps maul your face a bit with the poker, stain your hands and face dark and then drop you out of the window. Tomorrow there will be a small paragraph in the papers about another sailor's being killed by thugs. 'Mr. Preston, the author, who was seen by a reporter, had heard nothing as his bedroom opened on the court.'"

Preston moved uneasily in his chair. His face was ashy pale and his mouth hung limply open. Was there no way to save himself? This devil into whose hands he had fallen, had forged his chain so carefully that there seemed no possibility of a weak link

anywhere. His eyes wandered around the room. If someone would only come! His letters were still there on the desk—perhaps—God! an idea! Think carefully! The top one was from Margaret, in answer to his note asking her to come up from Newport the next day! The color crept back into his face and he looked at his would-be-assassin with a new expression.

"Your plan is an excellent one," he said clearly, "but there is one difficulty. You knew I had no relatives anywhere and you counted upon my not having any friends in this part of the world. Unfortunately for you, my fiancée is at Newport and will be in New York tomorrow; you could hardly pass yourself off for me, with her!"

The stranger let the revolver fall upon the table without saying anything. Then, with a short laugh, he stood up.

"The game's up then," he said.

"Your's," cried Preston, springing up, "not mine; but it's my move now!"

"I don't mind telling you now," said the stranger, "that I am Arthur Kenworth, the actor. You may have heard of me. I understood there was likely to be some dissatisfaction with the actor the management has chosen for the leading part in 'Hermione Wardor;' in fact, you said something of the kind yourself just before you discovered me here. I should like to have the part and I've taken this, ahem! somewhat unusual means of letting you see my ability. You must admit, I can act."

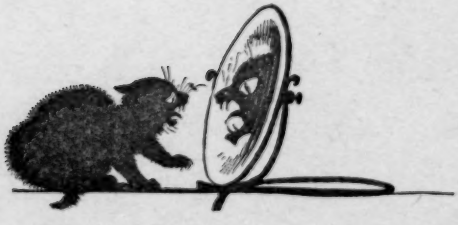
"Yes," said Preston, walking toward the door, "I admit that."

"Then I may come and see you again, on the subject?"

"I will let you hear from me," replied Preston.

"Oh! very well. Address me in care of The Actor's Secretary Association, 114 West 40th St. Good evening."

"Good evening," answered Preston, and closed the door.



Average: Above and Below

BY GAIL KENT

BERT SANGER bent over the cradle and patted the little squalling lump therein. Then with an awkward hitch to his belt, turned to say good-bye to his wife.

"There ain't a thing for you to be skeered of, Mollie; we don't never have callers, you know. But in case anything comes botherin' you, there's the gun behind the door all loaded an' ready. But I ain't thinkin' you'll be troubled none."

He gave her a resounding smack, more it seemed because she put up her face than because he had planned it. "Back in three days," he called from the saddle, and began his long lope across the plains.

Mollie, waving long after he was beyond sight of her apron, watched until he became a mere speck, then she went back to the shack. The baby lay in its homemade cradle asleep, and the mother's pale blue eyes deepened as she watched his peaceful breathing, tears of the recent tempest still creeping down the round cheeks. She had thought she could never be happy after Pa died, but now a contented year with her stalwart husband had passed, and the baby had brought completing happiness.

There was much to do before Bert came back; new cheesecloth curtains for the tiny windows must be made and a dress for the baby, and the whole shack should be scrubbed from corner to corner. Thus with planning for the next few days' activity and playing with the baby after his nap, the shadows grew long in the one-roomed home before Mollie realized that night was upon her. But she was the daughter of a prospector and had experienced loneliness before, so there was no fear in her heart when she lighted the lamp. They had talked of this trip of Bert's for several weeks, and the last time he had been to Minerstown, forty miles away, he had returned with "cloth and provisions enough to last a year," she had laughed. "To take up your mind while I'm gone to get the papers signed," he explained gravely. "Three days can seem a powerful long stretch when a woman's all alone, an' I might unexpected be kep' a day or so over."

Although she was not afraid, her heart did beat a little faster when, suddenly, she caught the sound of horse's hoofs far down the trail. Was Bert coming back? Had anything happened? He hadn't seemed just like himself when it was time to go, sort of short and uneasy like. But, no, this horse wasn't Lolly. This one was jaded and was going lame.

Some instinct made her slam tight the shack-door, but later she laughed at the impulse, for a woman swung herself from the dejected beast. The stranger kicked with spurred boot against the door, and when in hospitable haste, Mollie threw it wide, she

strode in, a large, coarse-featured creature, with the appearance of definite business on hand. The black eyes she bent on Mollie were hostile.

"Where's—," she began, then stopped abruptly, for Bert, Junior's wail rang through the room.

"My Gawd," exclaimed the other, her expression changing, "there's a brat,—what d'yer know,—a brat!"

She towered above pale-haired Mollie, seemed to hesitate, then went over to the cradle. For some reason, her son's vociferousness seemed to call for apologies. "He's been kinder colicky the last day or more," Mollie said, taking the child in her arms. Sensing himself to be the center of attention, the baby ceased his yells and gazed speculatively at the stranger. The gaze was returned, then the visitor poked a finger at him, around which he immediately curled his tiny fist. "My Gawd!" again ejaculated the stranger.

It was only when Mollie put the baby down, preparatory to heating water for his bath and began to speak about her husband's absence, that the stranger's arrogance returned. "So you're Red Brandon's daughter, an' you'n' Bert Sanger got spliced as soon as your Pa cashed in. You're the girl what was sent East to a boardin' school for a year. I remember hearin' 'bout you." She ran a calculating eye over Mollie's drab person, and seemed to be gratified with the mental comparison. "Been married a year. Bert good to yer?"

Mollie's face flushed. She might not show to advantage her smattering of Eastern culture, but she had brains enough to resent this stranger's impertinence. "Couldn't be kinder," she answered briefly, and looking at her narrowly the other woman thought, "Why, I bet it's the truth. He's a regular family man."

But though the stranger extracted all the information she wished from Mollie, the latter learned only that Nell, as she asked to be called, was on the way to see a sick sister in Rockburg City, eighty miles east. The details of her trip and its necessity were vague indeed, but Mollie gave little heed to this in the pleasure of having company, unconscious that she spoke too frankly of her own affairs. Bert had sold the girl's share in her father's mine, had gone to have papers signed, and in the spring they would move to Minerstown. When Nell went out to her patient horse her face was very grave. By the light of the lantern she spread out a scrawling letter:

"You jest hold on. I'll be in Forkstown Thursday with the money your fussing for. Bert."

Had he taken the money with him and left the woman to make the discovery after days of waiting? Nell cursed under her breath. The colorless femininity of Mollie made no appeal to her and she could understand how speedily a red-blooded man like Bert would tire of it. Still, it was a dirty trick. With no faith in his word, she had come herself to pull him away from his latest siren back to her own glowing charms which had long enmeshed him, but she found Mollie with a wedding ring and—the baby. Nell had laughed mirthlessly when she noted the plain gold band. Bert had taken long risks and the ring was as

meaningless as a piece of tin. But for some reason she could not tell Mollie then, so she bided her time.

Night was black on the plains and hills. The horse was fed and rubbed. When Nell entered the shack again Mollie explained, "I've fixed you a shakedown in this corner and I'm going to take the baby over here on this side with me. I'm hopin' he'll sleep all night so you won't be waked. You look plumb tuckered out. Here's the gun Bert said to use if anyone come botherin', but I ain't afraid; no harm'll come this way."

Nell slapped the revolver at her side. "I've got my own little shooting-iron," she said. Then some impulse made her pick up the gun. Without explanation she opened the barrel. "Blanks!" she whispered to herself. "Ain't he the d—— cuss. Blanks!" Nevertheless the blank cartridges were replaced and the gun returned to the corner. "I guess you ain't no cause for worry," she said shortly, and when Mollie puffed out the lamp, flung herself on the improvised bed.

Wide-eyed she lay thinking. The gun had told a wretched story. He was coming after the money himself, and for Nell there was but one explanation. He cared for Mollie, and in a few days would return, hear the story of the robbery, and go on living with her as if nothing had happened. Nell ground her teeth. Two or three times she had written him, "You give me back the money I give you to start up the dance-hall that went broke, an' we'll call it quits. I ain't hankering for hide nor hair of you, but I wants my money." She had lied. It was Bert she wanted. A wave of primitive hatred swept over her when she considered that the negative charms of Mollie had held Bert for over a year. But she smiled grimly. To-night would see his little game blocked.

Suddenly the baby stirred with fretful wail. Instantly Mollie was awake. Then came the piercing shriek, distorted face and convulsed limbs, which strike terror to every mother-heart. Where did Mollie get her knowledge of babyhood ailments and their treatment? At once she was alert, efficient, and moved with certainty and rapidity, while Nell was an eager but humble follower. The two women worked and watched. One prayed and the other cursed, and both willed the little life to stay with such fierce determination, it could hardly flutter away. At last normal pallor replaced the blue tinge in the baby's face, limbs relaxed, and the tiny hands no longer beat the air in pain. Mollie, worn out with two hours of breathless fighting, gave Nell the baby to hold while she put away the mustard, hot water and other evidences of the conflict.

In all her brazen, tarnished life, Nell had never held such a tiny bit of humanity. The little fuzzy head nestled on her bosom as if it were the most womanly resting-place in the world, and the exhausted baby went peacefully to sleep.

Soon Mollie took him and in a few moments she, too, was deep in the sleep of exhaustion. Nell lay down again, and with quiet came the memory of expectation. She had been listening for the sound of a horse on the trail. Now, however, was a new determination. She still felt the fuzzy head trustingly nestled on her breast

and saw tired Mollie's grateful eyes lifted to hers when the baby's breathing became normal. Vindictiveness was gone, but bitterness increased when she thought of Bert. The night wore on slowly; then to her dozing senses came what she had awaited for,—hoof-beats on the trail. Making sure that Mollie was asleep, she slipped from the shack. Bert Sanger was going to get what was coming to him now. He had played two women false. One could look after herself and make him live to rue it, but the other was a clinging, one-man woman, and she had borne him a child.

The horse came slowly up the trail. Evidently the robbery was to be as noiseless an affair as possible. Bert ran the risk of being recognized, but he always took long chances and usually got away with them. Nell saw the black shape of the horse turned toward the shack. Lolly could not have been ridden far that day, for she was still quite fresh. Then Nell went forward. Mollie had had fright enough for one night, nor was the baby to be roused again. But before the startled Bert could more than ejaculate an oath, Lolly, fretted by the enforced slow trot of the last mile, reared at sight of the black hulk before him, then plunged forward, and Nell's big frame went under the pounding hoofs.

In a trice, Bert was out of the saddle. "Mollie! Mollie!" he cried in agonizing fear. The tone brought a laugh to Nell's bleeding lips.

"It's Nell. Take off that mask you fool, an' shut up or she'll hear you."

But there was no sound from the shack. Thoroughly worn out, mother and child slept. Nell tried to rise, but fell back. She was silent a moment, then spoke with difficulty. "Listen; I'm done for. I guessed what you was up to. I ain't told her nothin'. You're a mean cuss, Bert Sanger, meaner'n the average, but she thinks she's struck gold in you an'—you've got a kid. Tell her—you worried 'n' come back. My hearin' you an' comin' out not knowin' 'twas you 'll listen all right. I ain't goin' to squeal."

Again Mollie was awakened and this time to tragedy. Bert dragged the half-conscious Nell to the shakedown after Mollie's trembling fingers had lighted the lamp. Then Mollie turned to heat water to bathe the bleeding face.

"You're a good woman, Nell," whispered Bert. "She ain't the suspectin' kind."

"Oh, I'm like all our sort, I am, but she—she's different. She ain't much git up an' git to her, but she's a long ways ahead o' the average in goodness. Ain't it queer—the meaner a man, the more he hankers to have his woman good. When I'm out the way, you see that—that ring's made —the—real thing."

When Mollie came with the bowl of hot water, Nell's black eyes looked wistfully into hers. Being a woman, Mollie understood and laid the sleeping baby carefully by Nell's crushed side, but Nell was beyond pain. Her words came thickly, but freighted with content. "What—d'yer—know? Me, holdin'—a—baby!"

Jamaica Ginger

BY WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE

THE affairs of the Franklin Harringtons were approaching extirpation. However, neither young Harrington nor his equally young wife winced as yet. They had breakfasted uncomplainingly on crackers and coffee and now they were lunching on crackers and a can of salmon. There was no other food in the tin icebox that had been without ice for a week, and Mrs. Ann Walker, landlady, had just told them that her two first-floor front rooms must be vacated at the end of the week unless the overdue rent were paid.

When a young man throws up his job making pictures for a newspaper and comes out of the West to be an artist in New York, he invites extirpation. The Franklin Harringtons knew this, but they had not felt it until today. Harrington had pictures awaiting rejection in a dozen magazine offices, no money at all, and little hope. His last ten cents was represented by the salmon. The little hope lay in wash drawings for six postal cards, which might be accepted if they were delivered in the morning.

"This salmon tastes queer!" Franklin Harrington put down his fork and looked despondently across the rickety black walnut table on which they lunched. He laughed without mirth. "Everything has gone bad, I guess, including me. I never ought to have brought you into this, never, never!"

"Brought me into this!" Little May Harrington's blue eyes flashed. "Didn't I fairly push you head over heels into it? The only thing that makes me feel bad is to have you get discouraged."

"Right!" He straightened up in his chair and grinned a genuine grin. "You're the bulliest wife that ever lived!"

"I love you," said Mrs. Harrington, apropos of nothing, as she broke the last cracker and took for herself the smaller piece. But Franklin knew she had told him in three words why her faith in the transcendency of his genius never failed and why she laughed as the edges of her one good dress grew more frayed. He pounced on her disengaged hand.

"You are—"

"No spooning!" she interrupted. "You've got to finish your drawings today, and to-morrow—why, you mustn't work at all!"

"Why not?" he demanded.

"Because it's your birthday and you'd forgotten all about it!" His wife giggled ecstatically. "You'll be twenty-seven years old!"

"Huh!" Franklin Harrington snorted in masculine contempt. He could see nothing either joyous or mirth-provoking in the prospect of a birthday, but he said, as a concession to his wife's point of view: "If I get any money out of the post cards we'll have a spree."

"We'll dress up and go on a spree," agreed Mrs. Harrington. Her husband laughed.

"And if we don't get any money," he added, "we'll stay at home and go hungry."

He left the table and began work on the drawings. For the next half hour the only sounds in the room were those made by Mrs. Harrington as she busied herself with the inconsequential, all-important things whereby woman makes a home. At first Franklin worked rapidly, with his usual sure touch. Then he found himself slowing up and after some time he was able to trace his slowness to an intangible but persistent unpleasantness that was seeping through his being.

As Harrington located the trouble he looked up and noticed that May had left the living-room. He was about to call to her when a faint groan came from the bedroom; and then his name, spoken still more faintly. He jumped from his chair and reeled half way across the room. It seemed as though a howitzer shell had exploded in the pit of his stomach.

"Ow-o-o-o!" trailed from the lips of his wife. Franklin stumbled over the threshold and found her lying upon the bed. For one brief moment he thought of his work, and then he saw that she was suffering.

"Good heavens, what's the matter?"

"Tummy aches!" she whispered.

"So does mine," he groaned, sinking into a chair. "All of it aches."

"It was that salmon, Franklin!"

"Ptomaines!" he said.

"Haven't we some medicine to take?" she asked. "Jamaica ginger, or anything?"

"Not a drop of anything!" Franklin gritted his teeth. "And no money! I'll see if I can't borrow some medicine of Mrs. Walker. Keep your nerve up, dearest!"

Her answer was a whimper that drove Harrington to his feet. He staggered, pulled himself erect, and succeeded in walking to the hall door. The effort brought out a profuse perspiration and at once he felt better, although momentary twinges of pain bothered him. He went slowly downstairs and knocked at the ground floor apartment of the landlady. There was the sound of a ponderous movement within and Mrs. Walker, in her stern black afternoon garb, stood in the doorway.

"Have you a little Jamaica ginger that I could borrow?" asked Franklin Harrington, in his most conciliating voice, "or some whiskey? Mrs. Harrington is quite ill."

As Mrs. Walker absorbed his question, her mournful mouth took on a lengthened droop.

"I don't believe in licker," she rumbled, "and I ain't no hand to have such truck as Jamaica ginger in the house. Mis' Harrington ain't going to die here, is she?"

Franklin Harrington struggled with himself and succeeded in turning away without speaking his mind.

"No!" he flung over his shoulder, and started for the front door, although with little idea where he was going. One hand was on the knob when his glance caught the name "Franklin Harrington" among the letters on the marble shelf of the hat-rack, where mail for Mrs. Walker's roomers was left. Harrington tore

open the envelope and two enclosures fluttered in his grasp. One was a letter from the magazine where his pretentious cover design had been visiting for many weeks. The other was an elaborate combined check and release-of-all-rights for one hundred dollars.

As soon as Harrington realized that he actually had sold a picture for the princely sum of one hundred dollars, he wheeled and dove down the hallway to Mrs. Walker's door. Again her footsteps shook the walls and again she looked at him with lugubrious suspicion.

"I've just got a check for a hundred dollars!" Franklin tumbled the words out. "Can you cash it for me and take out what I owe you?"

Mrs. Walker took the large piece of paper and studied it for some time before she handed it back, with her topknot of hair waggling negatively.

"'Tain't like any check I ever see," she said. "Mr. Walker allus used to say when he was alive not to have nothing to do with something you don't understand."

Harrington snatched the check and rushed out of the house. The delicatessen man wouldn't make any bones about it, he thought. But the delicatessen man had suffered the idiosyncrasies of fate in Russia and New York for nearly three score years. He inspected the check-and-release and shook his head.

"I don't make no business by a check like that," he announced.

"Well, will you lend me a quarter?" blurted Harrington, desperately. "I haven't a penny in cash. My wife is very sick and—"

"What you call it—old stuff?" The shopkeeper grinned and began to rearrange some perfectly well ordered cans of string beans.

Franklin ran across the street to where an imperturbable bartender frequently had drawn him beer before the treasury began to run low. He laid the check on the bar, but he had no more than time to open his mouth before the bartender swung around and silently pointed to a sign that read: "No Checks Cashed Here." The owner of the check passed out of the saloon without a word having been spoken. On the sidewalk he paused to think.

Harrington realized that he was as helpless as he had been before the magazine's letter came. May was undoubtedly still suffering; possibly much worse. He might be able to get a doctor without money, but he would first have to find one. It would take as long to get an ambulance. Almost he would have traded his check for a quarter in cash.

As Harrington's glance roved desperately, a portly, moon-faced man came alone the street. Believing the old heresy that men of embonpoint are always good-natured, Franklin made a sudden resolve. He took his pride by the throat and fell into step with the stranger.

"I beg your pardon, but will you listen to me for a moment?"

The other man stopped, scowled, jerked a shoulder nervously and scowled again.

"My wife is ill—very ill." Harrington's voice was a trifle unsteady. "I want to get some medicine for her. I've got a check, but I can't get it

cashed and I want to know if you'll let me have a quarter, or even a dime, with your name and address so I can return—"

"Here!" The portly stranger dug into his pockets with a grunt and held out a coin. "Take it, but don't expect me to believe any such tommyrot as you're talking. I've heard it before!"

The mental picture of a huddled figure on the bed in Mrs. Walker's first-floor front was all that prevented the donor of that quarter from rolling in the street. As it was, he waded off in safety, heavy with irritation and surplus tissue, while the victim of his scorn remained inactive, but white and quivering with suppressed rage.

It took Harrington but a moment to recover. He had the quarter, and that was what he wanted more than anything else. A few quick steps took him to the corner drug store.

"A bottle of Jamaica ginger, quickly, please."

The clerk twisted a piece of paper around a little bottle and waited. Harrington held out his coin. The clerk picked it up, hesitated, and dropped it to the counter. It fell with a thud.

"Lead," he remarked, with a pleasant smile. "Somebody stung you."

Harrington, dazed, turned on his heel and walked out of the store. Suddenly panic seized him. Suppose it were too late for any medicine? He cursed himself for not having gone for a doctor in the beginning, and broke into a run. It seemed that his legs would never take him over the half block to Mrs. Walker's. He scrambled up the stairs, breathless, and flung himself into the first-floor front.

There was no sound in the rooms. Harrington gripped his hands and forced himself toward the bedroom. May was in a tumbled heap of blankets. He bent over her. With a great thankfulness in his heart, he saw that she was breathing the gentle breath of sleep.

One little hand hung from the edge of the bed and in it was clutched a tightly wadded handkerchief. As Franklin touched her wrist lightly to see if there were fever, the handkerchief dropped to the floor with a heavy plunk. He picked it up, and out of its folds a silver dollar rolled across the carpet.

May's eyes opened, found his looking down at her, and smiled.

"I'm all right now," she said. "Did you get the Jamaica ginger?"

"Did you have this all the time?" asked Franklin, ignoring her question and holding up the dollar.

"Uh-huh!" She beamed at him. "I saved it to buy you a necktie and celebrate your birthday!"

Mary

BY CLAUDE WETMORE

LAST night Mary came to me. It seems an age since then. She came as she always had come, in childhood and in young womanhood, because she was in trouble.

Mary in her happier moods had sought others, and finally, when she had herself to give, it was John to whom she yielded. That was twenty years ago, and although we have since lived in the same city we did not meet until last night. Then she came with the greatest sorrow of her life on her lips—her son must restore $10,000 or be charged with a felony. John, recovering from an operation, could not be told of his boy's crime.

And I promised, even as I had promised to mend her skate strap in days when we were schoolmates.

After she had gone I looked over my books, but the illusion was quickly dispelled. My ledger showed that perhaps double the amount needed was owing me, but these debits covered the practice of a decade, and many accounts were outlawed; others I knew to be uncollectible, and a number were owed by persons who were away for the summer.

As I put the ledger one side my glance fell upon my day book, a little work which I had copyrighted and sold to other members of my profession.

On each page were plates, the drawings so arranged that a patient's case could be described by markings. Opening this book at random I happened on the page which described the first case for the following day—two molars to be filled for David Eastman, president of the First National Bank.

It would have been unnatural for me to have slept after that; yet my hand was as steady as it ever had been in the morning, and a few minutes after the banker had left my chair I confronted him at his desk and asked for a loan of $10,000.

He spoke of collateral and the discount committee.

I had known that he would do so, but I had thought it right to give myself a chance; and then I gave myself another chance by telling him it would be impossible to wait the committee's action; moreover, I had no collateral, beyond bills receivable; and I must have this money at once, to save a friend from the penitentiary.

What! compound a felony! He was justly indignant.

Then I talked rapidly, in a low tone.

He paled and trembled like a wind stirred leaf. For a moment I thought he would faint. But he steadied himself and fetched me the $10,000.

I went with him to the office and extracted a molar, then I heard him direct his chauffeur: "To police headquarters;" the natural thing for him to do.

After indorsing a life insurance

policy so that David Eastman would be the beneficiary, I visited Mary and gave her what I had promised. She kissed me. It was the only kiss she had given me since the days of early childhood, and I don't believe John would have begrudged me this one.

It is a warm evening and the waters of the river are cool and tempting. But before I go I shall tell you what I whispered in the banker's ear:

"No instrument has been invented that will extract two teeth at the same time, but if you will lend me the sum named and come to my office immediately there will be no danger. Less than an hour ago I sealed two grains of cyanide of potassium in one of your molars and bound the filling to the other with a ligature."

The Carbon Copy

BY ARTHUR LEEDS

O, Carson—for God's sake—not yet! Not till I've told you something! It means the chair for you, almost certainly, if you do! I tell you, man, you're as good as sentenced for my murder the moment you press that trigger!"

Stillman's voice rose in a shrieking crescendo as he fairly vomited his frantic appeal for mercy, but it cracked on the last word and he gulped painfully, his whole body trembling with the realization of a long-expected horror.

Carson's reply was to spring backward and touch the wall-button that extinguished the overhead light which flooded the office. That left only the brass-hooded desk-lamp burning. Still keeping the other covered with the automatic gripped in his right hand, he turned the shade of the desk-lamp so that its rays fell squarely upon his cringing enemy, leaving the rest of the room in almost total darkness. Out of the darkness sounded the death knell of the avenger.

"That's exactly the way I've always planned to have you die! I could have shot you down a score of times during the past month, but I didn't want to do it when you didn't know it was coming. Now, I'm here—in your own office—and death lies in my right hand! You know it's there, and you know it's coming! Look at me! You can't see me, perhaps, but look at me! I want to look right into your eyes as this little bit of metal tears through your brain—that brain that has planned so skillfully—so evilly—for all these years! Look at me, damn you! and pray—if you know how!"

"Carson, please, listen! I didn't—"

"I don't care what you didn't do; I remember only what you *did!* Well, she's dead—and you're about to die. It was all too long ago for anyone to connect me with your death now. And we—her daughter and I—are too far away to be troubled by anything that may happen here tonight. When I take the boat tomorrow to go back to my little girl and my work, this will all seem like a bad dream, that's all. I'm as secure as though a bolt from Heaven were about to strike you down. A life for a life, then, and for me the knowledge that I've had my revenge! If you're ready, we'll—"

There was not a tremor of his hand as he raised the automatic. The other man felt rather than saw the movement that was to drop the curtain on his unwholesome career. He braced himself for a final, desperate appeal. His right hand went up to the inner breast-pocket of his coat.

"Carson—read this—take it and read it, and then—"

As his hand disappeared inside the coat, the other man's muscles went taut.

PRINT IN BINDING

"So that's where you carry it! Well, you'll never pull that on me!"

A red spurt of flame out of the darkness and an ear-splitting roar reverberated through the office and the adjoining room. Stillman's right hand, holding an envelope, was ripped out from beneath his coat. The hand waved up and down for a moment as one waves farewell from the deck of a departing ship; Carson almost laughed as he watched it. Then Stillman dropped to his knees and rolled gently over, lying in a curled-up heap on the rug beside the desk, a thin stream of blood running from his mouth and over the hand that held the envelope. Carson knew that in that part of the office building, and at that time, the shot would not be heard, even in the comparative silence of the lower New York night. He was interested in what the other's hand was holding, now that he realized it had not held a revolver. He bent over the dead man and snatched the envelope from the clutching hand.

It contained a thin sheet of paper—it was plainly the carbon copy of a typed sheet—and it read thus:

To Police Commissioner Hendry.

Sir:

The writer, James Foster Stillman, has only one enemy who hates him enough to wish to take his life. He has good reason to believe that that enemy—whose name, together with information regarding the position he now holds in the South American business world, will be found in the enclosed envelope—will attempt to kill him some time during the next two weeks. Accompanying this man's name and address will be found an outline of the circumstances which, the writer believes, will cause his enemy to attempt his life, from motives of revenge. It is earnestly requested that the enclosed letter shall not be opened unless the death of the writer is brought about in such a manner as to point indisputably to murder.

JAMES F. STILLMAN.

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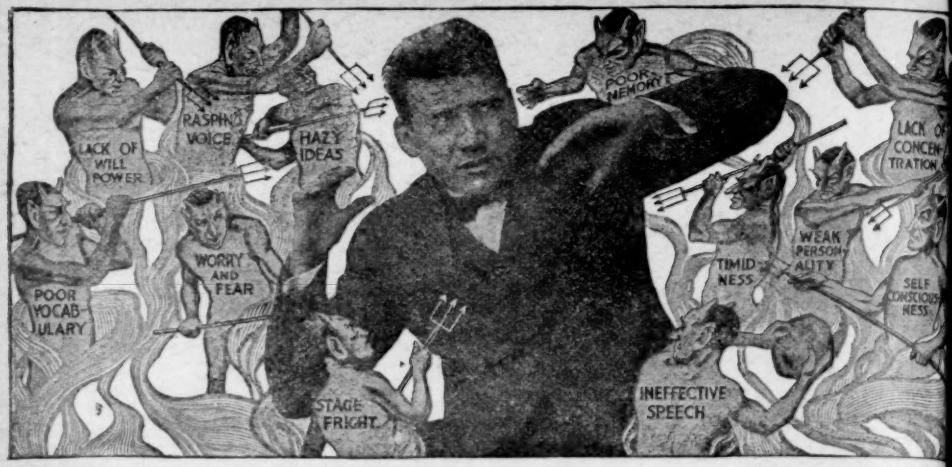

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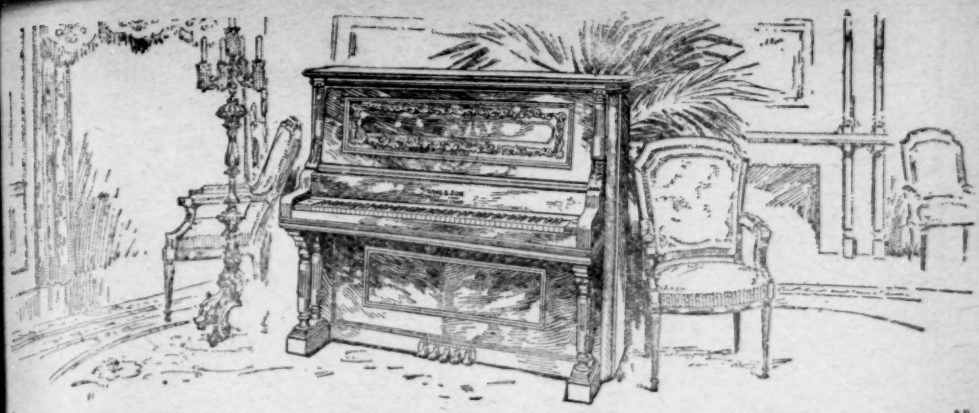

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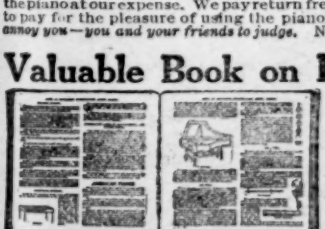

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